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Friday, 22 June 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Verbeke	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Tachie-Menson
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Peru	Mr. Chávez
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	South Africa	Ms. Qwabe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

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07-39152 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Germany, Guatemala, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda and Tunisia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation, under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Holmes to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. That is one of my top priorities, as indeed it should be for all Member States. In the four months that I have been Emergency Relief Coordinator, my visits have included the Darfur region of the Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, northern Uganda and Somalia. In each of them, and in too many other places as well, I have seen how hundreds of thousands of civilians have been uprooted from their ordinary lives by the effects of conflict and left stranded, their fate of no apparent consequence to those who fight around them. Countless thousands have been killed, injured, maimed, assaulted, humiliated, ignored and treated as less than human.

It is hard not to conclude that for all our advocacy on behalf of civilians in need of protection, and for all the resources that are now devoted to all aspects of protection by the humanitarian and peacekeeping communities, we are still failing to make a real and timely difference for the victims on the ground. That is an oversimplification, as I shall try to explain. But we cannot afford to do anything but look the facts in the face. Lip service is easy; effective action is much harder.

Protection can mean different things. To most people it means what it says: physical protection of innocent people from those trying to harm them. We must not lose sight of that primary meaning. However, protection of civilians in armed conflict also has a particular significance in the work of humanitarian organizations and in the context of the Council's responsibilities. For the Council, it represents a series of primary objectives outlined in its own aide memoire (S/PRST/2002/6, annex), prepared at the request of and adopted by the Council, which aim to transform the security, political, legal and moral environment in which all concerned operate. Those objectives include: security for displaced persons and host communities; ensuring access to those in need and a secure environment for humanitarian workers; strengthening the rule of law, in particular police and justice systems; protection of women and girls in particular from gender-based violence; involvement of women in decision-making and incorporating gender perspectives at every level and in all areas; ensuring the rights of children by preventing their recruitment, ending abduction, supporting family reunification and fulfilment of basic needs; action on disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of

soldiers; and finally, arms control, mine action, reconciliation and reconstruction programmes.

The list is long and important. And the increasingly widespread acceptance of these ideas and principles, together with the existence of institutions and staff specifically charged with monitoring and, where possible, ensuring their observance, is a huge step forward. So too is the agreement of 191 Member States in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) on a fundamental "responsibility to protect", a norm that not only emphasizes the primary responsibility of each State to protect its citizens and those within its jurisdiction from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity but also recognizes the role of the international community and the United Nations in helping States to exercise that responsibility.

I believe we are gradually making a difference as to what is regarded as acceptable and normal and that that will have a profound effect over time. The activities of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the four seminal resolutions of the Council and the specific inclusion in peacekeeping mandates of provisions on the protection of civilians are all key steps in changing the international environment. And we are seeing improvements on the ground in some areas. More robust peacekeeping and the strategic deployment of peacekeepers in the interests of protecting civilians has helped to facilitate returns or, at the least, an environment conducive to the provision of assistance in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In northern Uganda, southern Sudan and Nepal, relative peace and stability are allowing some refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes and to begin the arduous task of re-establishing their lives. Implementation of the cluster approach should lead to a more coordinated protection response at the field level among United Nations agencies and their partners through the action of a specific protection cluster.

In many places, however, the picture remains sombre and profoundly worrying. Allow me to highlight three areas of particular concern.

The first is the targeting of civilians, whether deliberately or through lack of concern about the consequences of the use of force. As noted by the Council in its resolutions on the protection of civilians, such acts are flagrant violations of international humanitarian law. Yet, day in and day out, they are too often what we see, particularly in the internal conflicts and civil wars that have increasingly replaced wars between States in today's world.

Civilians bear the brunt of indiscriminate firing and violence in populated areas, including cities, where warring parties fail to distinguish, or even to try to distinguish, between combatants and the civilian population; or where they employ methods of combat or types of weapons — such as cluster bombs — that are out of all proportion to any military advantage to be gained; or where, just as culpably, they deliberately place themselves among civilian populations to try to deter attacks or at least ensure that the opposing side will damage its own image by killing civilians if they do attack.

In Somalia, fierce fighting in Mogadishu involving heavy weapons, between March and early May, resulted in the killing of over 400 civilians and the wounding of 700 more — for the most part, older people, women and children — as well as the destruction of countless homes and livelihoods. Civilian casualties resulting from the indiscriminate use of force — whether from Israeli military operations, from violence between Palestinian factions, or from indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel itself — have characterized fighting in the occupied Palestinian territory.

In Afghanistan and also in Iraq, in addition to the dreadful toll of civilian deaths caused by insurgents and militias on all sides, the civilian casualties resulting from security operations of multinational forces and Government security forces are of increasing concern, even if there is no suggestion of deliberate targeting. Last weekend in Afghanistan was particularly tragic — 18 children died as a result of separate attacks by insurgent and multinational forces — and the overnight news of possible further civilian deaths reinforces that concern. In Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) estimates, an average of 94 civilians died violently every day throughout 2006 owing to the actions of all sides in the conflict.

Civilians are too often deliberately targeted in order to create a climate of fear and to destabilize populations. We see this in calculated attacks by Janjaweed and other militias on innocent villagers in Darfur and Chad; in brutal sectarian, ethnic and

political violence in Iraq; in the large-scale killing and abduction of civilians, particularly women and girls, by ruthless armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as arbitrary executions and acts of banditry attributed to Government forces; and in assassinations, disappearances and other violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law by those bearing arms in places as far apart as Sri Lanka and Colombia.

One particularly horrifying trend is the increasing use of suicide attacks including car or truck bombs, or improvised explosive devices (IEDs), to use the chilling technical term. Such attacks are most often perpetrated quite intentionally in public places: places of worship, markets, squares and other civilian areas where people gather in the normal course of their lives and where there is no military advantage to be gained. The inevitable result is carnage among wholly innocent civilians, thousands of lives ruined forever and a pervading sense of insecurity, disrupting even the most basic forms of public life. In Iraq, UNAMI reports, over 700 civilians were killed and more than 1,200 injured in such attacks during the first three months of this year alone. Only three days ago, the bombing of a mosque in Baghdad resulted in the death and injury of over 200 civilians. Similar trends in countries such as Afghanistan, Lebanon and Somalia are profoundly worrying.

Those who send so many young men and women to their bloody ends, along with their innocent victims, in order to foment ethnic or sectarian tension and violence bear a heavy responsibility. Those who keep quiet about such attacks or even privately applaud them share that responsibility and appear heedless of the likelihood that they, or their societies in their turn, may become victims of this inhuman method of spreading pointless death and destruction.

Another repugnant manifestation of the deliberate targeting of civilians, also too common in too many of today's conflicts, is gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence. It has been used as a calculated method of warfare in places such as Bosnia, Rwanda and Liberia and is currently used in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and occasionally in other conflicts too, including that in Darfur. Its aim is to brutalize and instil fear in the civilian population — especially women and girls, but also sometimes boys and men — to weaken their resistance and resilience through humiliation and shame and to destroy the social fabric of entire communities. Survivors are left with horrific physical and psychological scars. In the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, over 27,000 cases of sexual violence were reported in 2005 and 2006. From March 2006 to April 2007, 6,000 cases of sexual violence were reported in Ituri, also in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Only a handful of those cases have ever been the subject of a judicial process.

In its resolution 61/134, the General Assembly urged all Member States to take effective measures to address gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies and to make all possible efforts to ensure that their laws and institutions are adequate to prevent, investigate and prosecute acts of gender-based violence. The Council, in its resolution 1674 (2006), condemned in the strongest terms all sexual and other forms of violence against civilians in armed conflict, in particular women and children. The Council undertook to ensure that peace support operations work to prevent such violence and address its impact where it takes place. That is vital, as is the International Criminal Court's recent decision to investigate cases of rape in the Central African Republic.

Nevertheless, the nature of sexual violence and its consequences demand that we, the United Nations and its Member States — particularly those within whose borders such crimes are committed — do much more to prevent and respond to them and to hold to account their perpetrators, as well as the commanders under whom such crimes are committed. That requires more robust coordination and more coherent action by United Nations agencies and their partners. The United Nations recently launched United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, a coalition of 12 United Nations entities that aims to do just that, as well as to support national efforts to prevent sexual violence and respond effectively to the needs of survivors.

Combating gender-based violence also requires still greater stigmatization of such violence by national courts and the ICC as a particularly grave form of war crime and crime against humanity. Last but not least, the United Nations itself and Member States must do still more to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping forces operating in the name of the United Nations and to ensure that there is no impunity for those responsible.

A second area of particular concern is the continuing displacement of civilians as a result of, or sometimes as the very purpose of, conflict. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that there were an estimated 9.9 million refugees at the end of 2006, an increase in the global refugee population for the first time since 2002 — primarily because of refugee flows from Iraq — as well as 24.5 million internally displaced persons, all people deliberately forced from their homes and normal lives, or having had to flee to avoid violence and conflict and to meet their basic needs and those of their families.

In Iraq, UNHCR currently estimates that there are 2.2 million people internally displaced, while a further 2.2 million have sought refuge abroad. In Darfur, the ranks of the internally displaced continue to swell, with over 150,000 people displaced during the first five months of this year alone, bringing the total number again to well over 2 million. More than 237,000 people have also fled Darfur for neighbouring Central African Republic and Chad, countries which are also confronted by large internally displaced populations of 212,000 and 150,000, respectively.

In the Central African Republic, the figures have increased by more than 60,000 in the last six months. In Somalia, the intense violence in Mogadishu between March and early May displaced some 390,000 people, to add to the many hundreds of thousands long-term displaced. There may still be as many as 700,000 IDPs in Côte d'Ivoire, despite recent political progress. And in Sri Lanka, 300,000 people have been internally displaced during the last 15 months due to hostilities. Overall, it is estimated that so far this year an additional 1.5 million people have been internally displaced by war in those and other countries.

While displacement is as old as war itself, that does not mean that we should accept it as inevitable. On the contrary, we must look for better ways of preventing the conditions that lead to displacement, as well as trying to deal with the results. That includes emphasizing, in our actions and resolutions, the right to voluntary, safe return and the rejection by the international community of the results of ethnic or sectarian cleansing. To do otherwise would be to condemn millions to lasting misery and degradation. As I heard and saw for myself in the camps that I visited in Africa, becoming displaced often marks only the beginning of further frightening challenges to survival. These include continuing insecurity; occasionally, as we have seen in Darfur, repeated displacement through attacks on camps; and exposure to further serious risks, especially in militarized camp settings, such as gender-based assaults and forced recruitment.

Despite the efforts of relief agencies, displacement too often leads to hunger and illness, both physical and mental. It erodes human dignity, as individuals and families become dependent on others for their survival. Where children are deprived of access to education and adequate health care, the effects of displacement can last a lifetime and ruin future generations, too, with camps becoming the frame of reference for what is normal. For too many of the world's displaced, the experience will translate into a permanent loss of livelihood, culture and opportunities, and turn into chronic destitution. Life in a camp, even when basic needs are met, is a life of misery: inactivity and boredom are profoundly debilitating and commonly lead to increasing politicization and militarization on the part of those concerned, thus perpetuating cycles of violence and further reducing the chances of returning to peace, stability and normality.

Even if peace can be restored, there is still the enormous challenge of returning home and re-establishing lives, sometimes after a few months but often after many years or even generations. As we see in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, that also involves addressing specific protection challenges if return is to be truly voluntary, safe, dignified and, ultimately, sustainable. Aside from the provision of basic services, these challenges include restitution of land and property, community reconciliation, and the painstaking clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnance in areas of return.

The third area I would like to emphasize today is access and security for humanitarian workers themselves. The Council has often underlined the importance of safe and unhindered access for humanitarian staff to civilians in armed conflict. In all my encounters in the field, aid workers have emphasized access as the main prerequisite for humanitarian action, which, for millions of vulnerable people caught up in conflict, is often their only hope for survival. Yet frequently, and, I fear, increasingly, we see that such access is anything but safe and far from unhindered.

In Darfur, the targeting and harassment of aid workers continues to place enormous strain on the delivery of life-saving assistance to millions of people. Between January and May of this year, more than 60 humanitarian vehicles were hijacked, usually by rebel groups of one kind or another, and 56 staff temporarily abducted. Thirty-one aid convoys were ambushed and looted, and 13 relief organizations forced to relocate due to attacks. Of particularly grave concern are incidents of assaults against, and detention of, humanitarian staff and the killing of one non-governmental organization (NGO) and one United Nations staff member and 10 African Union personnel.

Certain agencies and NGOs contributing to providing some measure of protection to the displaced and drawing attention to abuses have been harassed by the authorities. The Joint United Nations-Government of the Sudan communiqué agreed in April has begun to produce some results in terms of reductions of other so-called bureaucratic obstacles, which is most welcome, but there remains a long way to go.

In Sri Lanka, more than 600,000 inhabitants of the Jaffna peninsula have faced shortages of basic necessities since August of last year, when the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) restricted access to the peninsula by road and by sea, respectively.

In Iraq, access for United Nations agencies and international NGOs is extremely limited throughout the country due to the high level of insecurity. If we are to do more to tackle the growing humanitarian crisis within that country, it will be important to establish an understanding with the parties to the conflict, regional actors and key Member States on the fundamental importance and inviolability of access and security for humanitarian workers.

Elsewhere, too, we continue to see deliberate and unacceptable attacks on aid workers. This month alone, we have seen the killing of two staff members of the Lebanese Red Cross at the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr el-Bared, the scene of fighting between Lebanese forces and Fatah al-Islam militants; the killing of a Médecins Sans Frontières staff member in the Central African Republic after her vehicle was shot at, apparently by members of the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy; the killing in West Darfur of a staff member of Action by Churches Together-Caritas; and the murder of two workers from the Sri Lankan Red Cross. Let us remember that in 2006, 24 aid workers were killed in Sri Lanka, including 17 staff of Action Contre La Faim in a single horrifying act. The perpetrators of all these crimes are yet to be brought to account.

Killing humanitarian staff and arbitrarily denying access violates international humanitarian law. It also threatens the lifeline to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people. I therefore propose that we should follow and assess more systematically the reasons for and consequences of such denials or restrictions and report instances of grave concern back to the Council, in accordance with resolution 1674 (2006).

In conclusion, if I have portrayed a somewhat bleak picture in this briefing, the reason is that there is still a lot to be bleak about, and no room for the Council or anyone else to be remotely complacent about what has been achieved so far. Nevertheless, as I have also tried to suggest, the picture is not devoid of progress or even of a certain degree of hope. The humanitarian community continues to work hard to improve its performance in protection on the ground, through its focus on the issue, its monitoring and advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building, and devotion of specific staff to this cause. International presence on the ground, even an unarmed presence, can make a huge difference in inhibiting violence against civilians, which is why access and a keen interest in protection from those who have access are so vital.

This Council has taken important steps towards better protection for civilians through its actions and its resolutions, the dividends of which are, for example, being seen in terms of more robust peacekeeping and more strategic and protection-related deployment of peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I suggest that it may also be useful to take a systematic look at the practical effect that the inclusion of protection of civilians in a number of peacekeeping mandates has had on the ground in order to draw the right lessons for future deployments.

And if there is one thing we need to do above all, it is to end the culture of impunity which underlies so many abuses. Rule of law and judicial redress are crucial and should be emphasized in everything we do. In the particular case of sexual violence, more involvement of women in all aspects of protection, including peacekeeping itself, would make a real difference to attitudes.

More broadly, while humanitarians can ensure survival and dignity to a certain degree; while peacekeepers can enhance the safety and security of affected populations; and while, together, we can help create a climate conducive to reconciliation, it is worth repeating again that only political solutions can end the vast majority of conflicts. The United Nations, including this Council and the Member States, must decide once and for all to invest more in conflict prevention, in facilitating political solutions through increased mediation capacity and support to help resolve conflict, and in immediate post-conflict measures to prevent rapid relapse into conflict.

For my part, I will continue to work with colleagues in the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that protection concerns are fully integrated into our mediation and peacekeeping efforts. I will also continue to engage this Council and Member States in seeking improved implementation of the resolutions on protection of civilians and more systematic inclusion of protection of civilians concerns in the work of the Council. I will also continue to bring situations of grave humanitarian concern to the Council's attention through briefings, through the reports of the Secretary-General, or where necessary, and pursuant to resolution 1674 (2006), directly through the Secretary-General. Only where the international community is united and resolute can we hope to protect the defenceless, as we have the obligation to do.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Holmes for his important briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to thank Mr. Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his clear and precise briefing, which reflected the alarming effects of human violence.

We also wish to acknowledge the outstanding work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which is responsible for providing assistance to millions of civilians suffering the consequences of armed conflict, particularly children and women.

We cannot speak of the protection of civilians in armed conflict without first referring to the prevention of such conflicts. This Council is obligated under its Charter mandate to take measures to prevent conflicts, which requires us to understand in depth the specific causes that have led to them. Many such causes transcend mere political and military confrontations. Terrorism, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the impact of climate change are important factors to take into account when we consider conflict prevention.

Moreover, the protection of human rights must always be the guiding principle of the Security Council's work, be it in the context of preventing or of resolving conflicts. In addition to being one of the pillars of this Organization, respect for human rights is the basis for a peaceful society because, where those rights are guaranteed, the principal structural, psychological and cultural causes of conflict cease to exist.

While we assert that preventing conflicts is an important part of our work, solving them is equally so. In undertaking that task, we must above all protect civilians in armed conflict — those who take no part in it, especially women and children. In armed conflicts, civilians fall victim to violent attacks whose physical and psychosocial effects often last longer than the conflict itself. They may also lose their homes, their livelihoods, their right to education and health care, and other fundamental rights. In the worst cases, they may lose their lives and their families.

Thus, international humanitarian law — specifically the Hague and Geneva Conventions and their protocols, other human rights instruments and Security Council resolutions — provide a broad and compelling framework for United Nations action to protect civilians in armed conflict.

Nevertheless, this Organization has often failed to resort to those mechanisms to act, shirking our responsibility to protect civilians in the most atrocious conflicts. The conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the current conflict in Darfur and the recent events in Lebanon are clear examples of that situation. The failure to act has cost this Organization credibility, but the blow to our reputation is insignificant when weighed against the loss of

innocent lives. We must never forget those victims if we wish to avoid falling once again into inertia.

I cannot conclude without stressing the ultimate role of this Organization with respect to international humanitarian law, as reflected in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, which refer to the responsibility of States and the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

It is our understanding that the responsibility to protect implies that, over and above the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, when a State or, to phrase it more aptly, its governmental institutions are unwilling or unable to meet their responsibility to protect the human rights of their citizens, it is up to the international community, and the United Nations in particular, to adopt timely and decisive collective measures to do so.

Mr. Chávez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to thank Mr. Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his excellent briefing, which brought home the need to recognize that much remains to be done if the United Nations, including the Security Council, is to be effective in protecting civilians who find themselves immersed in various armed conflict throughout the world.

We therefore express our concern at the dangerous situations that continue confront civilians in conflicts, where they fall prey to insecurity, violence and the violation of their human rights. The cases we have seen in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Gaza, Iraq, Darfur, Chad, Afghanistan and Kosovo — to name just a few — show that, despite the good intentions of the international community, the Security Council and the respective Governments involved, the civilian population, and the displaced above all, remain without improved protection and are often the direct targets of attacks and gender-based violence.

Given the situations described in the briefing, it is necessary to reaffirm the responsibility of all parties involved in armed conflict to respect their obligations under international law regarding the protection of civilians. Likewise, parties must ensure humanitarian access to populations affected by conflict. They must also provide protection for the staff of humanitarian agencies providing necessary assistance.

We share the Under-Secretary-General's concern about the high and ever-increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, who need effective humanitarian responses to meet their needs. The needs that arise from the cases described by the Under-Secretary-General in his briefing, which no one would like to see repeated in the future, will require that the Security Council and the United Nations system intensify their efforts to make a real difference in the protection of civilians and to ensure the protection of their human rights. In that connection, Peru would like to highlight some considerations that may useful in that regard.

First, the Security Council must seek to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1674 (2006), which contains crucial provisions for the improvement of the international system to protect civilians in armed conflict. That includes the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Secondly, the Council must continue to support bodies and international organizations providing humanitarian assistance, especially those present on the ground, in order to improve the efficiency of the protection of civilians, including internally displaced persons.

Thirdly, the Council must continue to seek new ways to address growing humanitarian challenges. That must be done in cooperation with other bodies of the United Nations system. An innovative example in this area is the Central Emergency Response Fund, which is intended to provide support to populations in need of humanitarian assistance.

Fourthly, the Council must cooperate with the International Criminal Court to combat impunity. Effectively punishing those responsible for serious violations of human rights is both an obligation of the international community and a way of sending a strong message about the rule of law.

Finally, the Council must continue to work with the Peacebuilding Commission.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that Peru believes that overcoming crises and restoring long-desired peace to countries in conflict pose a challenge to the Security Council: to bridge the gap between

good intentions and implementing concrete measures to protect civilians. We must therefore above all recognize that strengthening post-conflict protection for civilians requires decisive steps to build sustainable institutions in affected countries, including the establishment of stable economic conditions and development strategies, with a view to preventing social exclusion, which in many instances is the main cause of domestic conflict in the first place.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): We are encouraged that this meeting provides a forum for us to jointly reaffirm our commitment to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We reiterate that the primary responsibility for protecting civilians lies with the parties to an armed conflict, and that international efforts should complement that function. However, in situations where parties to an armed conflict are unable or unwilling to protect civilians, the international community has a distinct role to play. I would like to touch on a few key elements of this topic that we feel require particularly close attention and warrant full Security Council support.

The recurrent use of sexual and gender-based violence is arguably one of the most significant protection challenges, due to its scale, profound impact and tendency to be ignored. Sexual and gender-based violence must be more effectively addressed. United Nations peace support missions have a clear role to play in preventing that violence and addressing its impact.

In Burma, for example, there are widespread reports of serious human rights abuses, including rape by Burmese military personnel in conflict areas and other ethnic minority areas. The Burmese army's strategy of forced relocation to deny support to armed insurgents reportedly has been accompanied by serious human right abuses, including rape. Burmese refugees newly arrived in Thailand and internally displaced Burmese near the Thailand-Burma border report that Government soldiers in the Chin, Karen and Karenni states continue to rape women and girls there. Killings, beatings, torture and rape by Government soldiers have also been reported against Shan, Rohingya, Mon and other ethnic minorities. The youngest rape victim was only eight years old. Other abuses of civilians reportedly perpetrated by Burmese military personnel include forced labour, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, seeding villages with landmines, using civilians to clear mines and the destruction of homes, granaries, animals and other civilian property.

In Darfur, as in other cases where rape has been used as a tool of armed conflict and/or of political oppression, rape by Government soldiers and/or their allied militias is widespread and systematic, and is typically committed in ways that appear designed to humiliate and demoralize not only the victims but also the communities of which they are members. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded in April 2007 that there was "widespread sexual violence during attacks by Sudanese Government forces and allied militia last December".

Where necessary, the protection and creation of secure environments for displaced populations should be a primary objective for peacekeeping. We reiterate that the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his Office should be engaged in the planning of United Nations peacekeeping efforts from the earliest stages.

The protection of internally displaced persons remains one of the biggest challenges facing the United Nations and the international community. It is important to state that internally displaced civilians living in camps are not always protected from serious human rights abuses. We applaud the work done by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Holmes in continuing to develop leadership and accountability in the protection sector. We strongly feel that this approach has the potential to strengthen the United Nations response capacity in humanitarian assistance and protection, providing a critical point of coordination, ensuring the efficient use of resources and maximizing impact.

Let me now turn to a few current situations of particular concern.

In the Sudan, attacks on civilians and deliberate displacement have been used as tactics of war, in flagrant violation of international law. While large-scale attacks on civilians have decreased in some areas of Darfur, grave protection concerns persist throughout the region. The briefing by Under-Secretary-General Holmes to the Council following his mission to the Sudan (see S/PV.5655) painted a stark picture of a humanitarian situation on the brink of an even larger-scale catastrophe. The situation in Darfur illustrates clearly the urgent role that the international community must play to ensure the safety of civilians, including

those who are internally displaced, when traditional means of protection have broken down.

Due to the continuation of violence and the tenuous security environment in Darfur, both those civilians affected by the conflict and those trying to provide humanitarian assistance are under direct threat. We continue to receive reports of attacks deliberately targeting United Nations and other humanitarian personnel. We stress the responsibility of the Government of the Sudan to hold those responsible accountable.

We further call on all parties to cease hostilities and to cooperate with the international community to advance a peaceful resolution of the crisis, including by facilitating the deployment of an effective hybrid peacekeeping force, easing the delivery of humanitarian assistance and supporting a viable United Nations/African Union-led peace process.

We reiterate the recent appeal by the International Contact Group for Somalia for an immediate cessation of hostilities, and we continue to call on all parties to facilitate humanitarian access for the delivery of life-saving aid. We expect the Transitional Federal Government to facilitate the critical work of the United Nations and humanitarian non-governmental organizations. We remain committed to supporting humanitarian assistance in Somalia.

The suffering of the Iraqi people, and the many innocent lives lost due to the violence in Iraq, is deplorable. Multinational forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are conducting military operations. At all times during such operations, the multinational forces strive to minimize any collateral damage and to avoid harm to the civilian population.

We all recognize the profound tragedy of civilian casualties during times of armed conflict. Insurgent activity that is aimed at civilians and that selects civilians as targets is an entirely different matter. It is an abomination and should be summarily condemned. It is inappropriate to equate any such deliberate targeting of civilians by terrorists to the operations of multinational forces in Iraq and Afghanistan aimed at restoring security and stability for the people of those countries.

We also remain deeply concerned about the numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees who have fled their homes due to violence and unrest in Iraq. We have strengthened and expanded our own programmes that address this humanitarian issue, and we urge broad international involvement. In particular, we urge the United Nations agencies currently in Amman to consider increasing their presence in Iraq. United Nations involvement will be critical to helping this vulnerable population, including through support to the Governments of Jordan and Syria to help them in providing education of displaced Iraqi children currently in their countries.

As we once again reaffirm our commitment to strengthening and reinforcing the protection of civilians in armed conflict, let us ensure that our words and intentions become real action.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I would like to express the strongest appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his passionate briefing, which provided a comprehensive picture of the progress made and of our continuing concerns about the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, which is one of our top priorities, as Under-Secretary-General Holmes rightly emphasized.

Italy fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union. Allow me to make only a few additional remarks.

Resolution 1674 (2006) marked a milestone in the work of the Security Council, affirming the responsibility of States to protect civilians in armed conflict, in line with the principles of international humanitarian law. We welcome the progress and positive achievements made in this field, which is at the core of United Nations activity in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and rapid response in times of crisis. We now have to focus on how to ensure the steady implementation of resolution 1674 (2006) — to move from words to deeds, as our colleague from the United States has just said. In this respect, Italy would like to stress three simple operational ideas. The first is to systematically address the issue of protection of civilians on the ground upon revision of the mandates of United Nations missions and operations. The second is to use a framework based on that of the Working Group on children in armed conflict and its reporting mechanism also for protection of civilians in armed conflict so as to provide, as so rightly highlighted by Under-Secretary-General Holmes, a better system of proactive — I stress the word "proactive" — monitoring and prevention, advocacy, awareness-

raising and capacity-building. The third idea is to encourage further cooperation among the relevant actors to follow up on the decisions of the Security Council in this regard, taking into due account the crucial role of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Under-Secretary-General Holmes's briefing was troubling in many ways. It addressed key protection issues, such as a rise in the deliberate targeting of civilians in conflict, the indiscriminate use of force, forced displacement and the issue of safety and access of humanitarian personnel. Let me briefly touch on a few aspects, before concluding my statement.

The protection of civilians is not an abstract political or legal concept. It is, of course, understood — as recalled by Under-Secretary-General Holmes and by many other previous speakers — that what is at stake here is the seriousness and credibility of our commitment to the responsibility to protect. Civilian suffering and casualties are very concrete, and particularly and increasingly troubling, realities in the very many crisis areas and the numerous aspects that were recalled by Under-Secretary-General Holmes. In this respect, we are particularly concerned about the protection of the most fragile groups, those who are the most exposed to the consequences of conflict. I am, obviously, referring to women and children.

Secondly, the consistent reports regarding the increase in the number of journalists being killed in conflict situations are alarming. Security Council resolution 1738 (2006) addresses the safety and security of journalists. Accordingly, Italy promoted the inclusion of a reference to it in resolution 1746 (2007), extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, and finally, in situations where any civilian population is the target of attacks, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides the legal basis for holding accountable those responsible for the attacks if a State is unwilling or unable to do so. In this regard, we must reiterate our commitment to end impunity.

I would like to close with the words of Under-Secretary-General Holmes, who rightly emphasized that "if there is one thing we need to do above all, it is to end the culture of impunity which underlies so many abuses" (*supra*).

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his important briefing to the Council.

Since February 1999, the Security Council has adopted several resolutions that reflect the international community's increasing commitment to develop and improve ways to address the tragic suffering of civilians living in areas of armed conflict. Those resolutions, particularly resolution 1674 (2006), have condemned the deliberate targeting of civilians, acts of violence and attacks against civilians, the forced displacement of civilians and the deliberate denial of access for humanitarian assistance.

In spite of these efforts, the world continues to witness an increase in the deliberate targeting of civilians, including humanitarian workers, by terrorist attacks. Civilians living in conflict areas are still suffering under the scourge of forced displacement. There are other matters for grave concern, such as the indiscriminate use of force and the accidental killing of civilians in conflict areas or in areas where military operations are conducted. This situation requires all parties in such areas to take the necessary steps to prevent risks to civilians, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949.

On the same note, we would like to recall Security Council resolution 1674 (2006), which reaffirms the provisions of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) regarding the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We would like to emphasize that, on the theoretical level, the responsibility to protect civilians is an important humanitarian principle, for it embodies a noble humanitarian value: defending innocent people whose only fault is that they live in or near areas of conflict and who, in most cases, are intentionally targeted for pure political and ideological reasons. But, from a practical and operational perspective, we should be cautious in dealing with this principle in order that it not be exploited or abused. If we apply this principle, while respecting the ideals behind it, we should ensure that our objectives are not politicized, that they rise above individual interests and that they reflect purely humanitarian motives.

What we need today is the effective implementation of actions and measures contained in the relevant Security Council resolutions aimed at improving conditions for civilians in areas of armed conflict. In this regard, we would like to stress that the parties to armed conflict, whether Governments or non-governmental actors, are duty-bound to comply fully with their commitments under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, since the responsibility to protect civilians rests, first and foremost, with the States concerned. The role of the international community is to provide the necessary protection to civilians and to find the means to mediate the settlement of conflicts peacefully. Peacekeeping, humanitarian relief operations and other forms of intervention under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in conflict areas are merely contingency solutions. Furthermore, urgent action is required to end conflicts in a definitive manner.

Security Council resolution 1674 (2006) lists various groups of civilians who suffer as a result of armed conflict and are in need of assistance and protection. That list, however, does not include the category of persons with disabilities in conflict areas, despite the serious impact that armed conflict has on such people. In that regard, we recall General Assembly resolution 60/131 on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which expresses grave concern about the devastating consequences that armed conflict continues to have on the human rights of persons with disabilities, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the preamble of which stresses the importance of providing full protection to persons with disabilities, particularly in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation.

In this regard, we would like to underline that it is important that the Secretary-General, in his next report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, to be submitted in October 2007, take into account conditions for persons with disabilities in conflict areas with a view to strengthening and improving ways of meeting their needs.

Finally, we would like to reaffirm our full commitment to promoting and strengthening the protection of civilians in conflict areas, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like first of all to associate myself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Germany on behalf of the presidency of the European Union.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and your country, Belgium, for having provided us with this opportunity to discuss once again the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We welcome the Secretariat's continued involvement in this matter. I would also like to thank John Holmes for his introduction to our debate.

I would like to focus on four points. The first concerns respect for international humanitarian law. How could we fail to note that civilians are the first victims of conflict? Even more serious, they are increasingly being targeted. Parties to conflicts are showing increasing disdain for international humanitarian law. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians and humanitarian actors carrying out their missions have become increasingly common. Thus, humanitarian space is now no longer a sanctuary. That phenomenon is disturbing, and we believe that it is the duty of the Council to remind all parties that they may not, under any circumstances, fail to comply with international humanitarian law, including, of course, the four Geneva Conventions, as well as the two Protocols additional to those Conventions, whose thirtieth anniversary we have just celebrated. We should not forget that 167 States are parties to those Protocols, and we invite all those States that have not yet done so to ratify them as soon as possible.

Compliance with international humanitarian law requires rigorous action against impunity for violators. The Council emphasized, in resolution 1674 (2006), of April 2006, "the responsibility of States to comply with their relevant obligations to end impunity" (*para. 8*) and recognized the relevance of "the full range of justice and reconciliation mechanisms ... including national, international and 'mixed' criminal courts" (*para. 7*).

In that regard, the International Criminal Court has a pre-eminent role to play in trying those principally responsible for the most serious crimes when national courts are not in a position to do so. The cooperation of States and the United Nations with the International Criminal Court is essential. The obligation to cooperate following on from the Rome

Statute and from Council resolutions must be respected.

Finally, I wish to recall that international humanitarian law also applies, of course, to forces engaged in peacekeeping operations. France welcomes the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse. We further recall the important principle of the non-refoulement of persons seeking refuge with the United Nations.

My second point concerns the protection of the most vulnerable populations. We note that sexual violence is now used regularly as a weapon of war. Such abominable crimes affect millions of individuals, and they must be prevented and punished. Resolution 1325 (2000) must be closely followed up in this regard.

Children are among the most vulnerable groups in that regard. The recruitment of children to serve in armed forces is equally unacceptable. On this front, however, some initial progress has been made thanks to the Security Council's action in the context of resolution 1612 (2005). We are pleased that the Sudan Liberation Movement has just signed a plan of action committing it to the demobilization of children. Also as a result of resolution 1612 (2005), other similar plans of action have already led to the release of several hundred child soldiers, in particular in Côte d'Ivoire. But that scourge still affects about 250,000 children throughout the world. We call on all the States mentioned in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report on this issue to fully commit to tangible cooperation with the Security Council, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and inter-agency task forces.

From Darfur to Iraq and Sri Lanka, millions of displaced people need protection. They are now more numerous than refugees, and the phenomenon is growing. We must afford them the greater protection they need owing to their vulnerability, with due respect for the Charter and the right of voluntary return.

Still with respect to the situation of the most vulnerable populations, I would add that we are concerned at the number of humanitarian personnel who have been killed. It is particularly inadmissible that those who come to help a population in distress should be targeted. Here, we must ensure compliance with resolution 1502 (2003).

Likewise, we are shocked to observe month after month that those who seek to shed light on situations of armed conflict, journalists, are being attacked while doing their job. At the initiative of France and Greece, the Security Council recalled, in resolution 1738 (2006), that journalists are civilians like others. The attacks against journalists must not go unpunished.

I turn now to the question of access to humanitarian assistance by vulnerable populations. As the Under-Secretary-General has just underlined, the question of access is central with respect to the protection of civilians. Without access, nothing is possible. Full, unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to civilians who need aid is a central demand which the Council made in resolution 1674 (2006). We believe that the Council needs to be fully informed of obstacles to humanitarian assistance. In this perspective, my country would see only advantages in the Secretary-General's next report on the protection of civilians containing information on specific developments on this question, including in the form of an annex if necessary.

My fourth and last point deals with the contribution of peacekeeping operations to the protection of civilians. In resolution 1674 (2006), adopted by consensus in March 2006, the Council reaffirmed its practice of ensuring that the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions include, where appropriate and on a case-by-case basis, provisions regarding, first, the protection of civilians, particularly those under imminent threat of physical danger within their zones of operation; secondly, the facilitation of the provision of humanitarian assistance; and, thirdly, the creation of conditions conducive to the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. I would recall that the Council stipulated in the same resolution that the protection of civilians should be given priority in decisions about the use of available capacity and resources and that protection mandates should be implemented.

Clearly, the Council has made demands with regard to United Nations operations, and those demands are ambitious when such operations are assigned a protection mandate. How do we assure that these demands are met? In our view, there are several possible approaches. First, it seems useful to enhance the doctrine of peacekeeping with a debate on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping

operations; this could perhaps also lead to a debate on rules of engagement. Secondly, we think it is important to take into consideration, in the context of the regular reports to the Security Council on the implementation of the mandates of peacekeeping operations, the civilian protection aspect when it appears in such mandates. And finally, we wonder whether it might not be useful for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to contribute to the Secretary-General's general reports on the protection of civilians and to be associated with the briefings the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs makes to the Security Council, at least with a view to responding to questions regarding the theatres of activity of certain operations.

These proposals are intended to give practical effect to the demands made in resolution 1674 (2006). They lead us to express our wish for further enhancement of the cooperation that already exists between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. We would appreciate it if, during his next briefing to the Security Council, Mr. Holmes would report to us on progress in that cooperation.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): First of all, let me join other speakers in thanking Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing.

Civilians have always been victims of warfare, throughout the history of humankind. Today, the picture remains gloomy. Conflicts in Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans and other zones of war have caused a considerable number of civilian casualties. We therefore believe that the protection of civilians in armed conflict is an urgent matter. We also believe that existing measures to protect civilians must be strengthened and that new measures must be sought.

We continue to have high regard for legal measures in promoting the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In particular, we attach great significance to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols.

As far as complying with international humanitarian law is concerned, my delegation underlines that armed State actors and armed non-State actors have equal responsibility in the protection of civilians and in adherence to the law. Compliance with humanitarian and human rights law by armed State actors can in general be easily monitored through various existing modalities. Challenges appear when it comes to non-State armed groups. My delegation recognizes the limits of State-centric international instruments in addressing the issue of protection vis-à-vis those groups. Accordingly, my delegation stresses the need for alternative measures to hold non-State combatants accountable when they violate human rights and humanitarian norms. In this regard, we welcome the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian and human rights agencies in promoting awareness of the instruments among non-State combatants and in ensuring that they obey those instruments. We believe that the United Nations could also contribute to that endeavour.

When conflict is taking place, civilians have also become displaced. Under such circumstances, they are generally deprived of their basic rights, including the right to food. Many die of disease or hunger. In that regard, we underline the critical importance of humanitarian assistance and continue to appreciate the value of humanitarianism in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We continue to support the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian agencies. We commend donor countries for their contributions and the countries receiving refugees for their generosity.

Indonesia is concerned over frequent incidents where humanitarian aid convoys are ambushed or where access to humanitarian assistance is restricted so that displaced civilians are out of reach. In our view, this tactic will only prolong the anguish of displaced civilians; thus, we cannot let it happen.

As regards conflict-induced displacement, my delegation has devoted particular attention to the needs of vulnerable groups, especially children and women. We stress that all parties to a conflict should make arrangements to meet the protection and assistance requirements of children and women and to ensure the unhindered delivery of basic necessary services.

We are also very concerned about the fact that humanitarian workers who provide the civilians with humanitarian assistance have increasingly become targets during armed conflict. This act is extremely deplorable, knowing that the workers went because they wanted to help and because they have ambition and wanted to mitigate human suffering.

Before I conclude, let me say a few words about the threat to civilians posed by landmines and other munitions. Civilians, including farmers and school children, in over sixty countries remain under the threat of anti-personnel landmines. The affected countries bear a costly burden and their citizens have to deal with potential death or injury every time they take a step.

We therefore welcome United Nations mine action activities carried out in collaboration with governments and other international organizations. We underline the importance of demining, victim assistance, mine-risk education and destruction of stockpiled landmines as part of mine action. We also urge countries that hold information about the sites of mines and other munitions they deployed during a war to share that information, especially with the United Nations, as a basis for further action.

My delegation holds the view that protection of civilians in armed conflict is multifaceted and thus requires comprehensive measures, including both legal and humanitarian measures. The political will of all parties concerned is essential in the implementation of those measures.

As a final point, we would like to reiterate that while protection of civilians in armed conflict should be strengthened, the best protection is the prevention of armed conflict itself. It is the role that the Security Council could play in promoting the prevention of conflict and in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Armed conflicts that in the past involved only military personnel are now involving civilians on a routine basis. In today's debate — which you were kind enough to convene, Mr. President, and we wish to thank you for that — conflicts we are discussing involve men and women of all ages, and the only thing they did wrong was to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, as innocent victims of the cruel game of those who control weapons.

So let us not talk about the category of civilians engaged in militias — whose objectives are debatable — who, having decided to engage in policy through means more violent than peaceful, seal their own fate. The only reason for that is ideology. These are the people who practice terrorism and the bulk of those they recruit, primarily from among extremists. Some of them are young or even only children.

It is for the young people and children that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes are increasingly being established, which are now part of the whole range of measures geared towards getting more young people back to civil society — which they never should have left behind — and which allow them to trade a rifle or combat fatigues for a more useful tool.

The third term of the DDR trilogy — the "R" of reintegration — is the measure whereby we assess the degree of reliability of a programme. It is the final point of a process whose objective is to build peace and to secure a commitment guaranteeing a non-return to the life of a fighter. That is where the Peacebuilding Commission should act, which now more than ever should be supported.

Serious attention should be paid to DDR programmes now underway in Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire so that not only young people but the "reconverted" will be freed from unemployment in the long term and will cease being a source of constant misfortune for the citizens of their countries as agents looting, stealing, rape, maiming and other forms of insecurity.

Two days ago the entire world commemorated the International Day of Refugees, of which there now about 14 million, along with 20 million internally displaced persons spread through 23 countries. Among the victims of crimes of genocide and atrocities of all kinds — which are the source of famine, malnutrition, illness or simply of exclusion and anything else that can breed death or desolation — we count all of those who are denied all human dignity and the right to the first among human rights, which is the right to life. It is women, children and other categories of vulnerable people of whom we are thinking and for whom today the strict application of those rights should be demanded.

Now more than ever, the action that the Security Council is called upon to take should be taken in the most coherent manner possible with governmental and nongovernmental organizations committed to the noble task of protection of and assistance for civilians, direct or indirect causalities of armed conflicts. From that point of view, the recently concluded agreement among the United Nations, the African Union and the Sudan

for a hybrid operation in Darfur is of particular importance for hundreds of thousands of individuals who are victims of attacks and secret killings. We hope this will become a well-merited act of deliverance, which is long overdue.

The principle of responsibility and the duty to protect were highlighted during the 2005 Summit, when the international community took on the obligation to protect people from the crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The international tribunals for Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone, concerning which the Council was briefed a few days ago, are today the expression of the professed will of the international community not only to recognize the sacred character of human life but also to convert that affirmation into a tangible reality and to punish those responsible for those attacks. Unfortunately, too many States still hide behind crassly political strategic interests, so as not to lend all the assistance needed by the Tribunals, even if — for example, in the case of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda or in Darfur or Somalia — some warlords, who have neither faith nor law, could have been severely punished.

The protection of journalists and humanitarian personnel is being given more attention, since now we see a situation of great concern, with tragedies sparing no continent. We see them in Southern Europe, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, the Middle East, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti.

Massive displacements of populations taken hostage, persecutions for cultural reasons, torture for political reasons or simply horrid crimes, the Janjaweed in Darfur of sinister reputation, Palestine, Somalia — all these have given us many lessons, enough for us to stress what Mr. Holmes said in his message at the start of the briefing.

More than ever, it is up to the international community to stand up to the increasing numbers of barbaric acts with the power of the law, of which the thirtieth anniversary of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, relating to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, commemorated on 8 June, served as a timely reminder. In order for the 1977 Protocols to the 1949 Conventions to be effective alongside the relevant Security Council decisions — such as resolution 1674 (2006) of 28 April 2006 and resolution 1738 (2006) of 23 December 2006, adopted following the two most recent open debates on this item — it is now more necessary than ever to combine political will with an active consensus against the spirit and practice of terrorism, which continues to motivate too many parties to the human tragedies of our times.

In the international community's imperative fight in that area, conflict prevention and the promotion of political and socio-economic solutions form the essential basis for firmly establishing the rule of law, with all its implications in terms of human rights. This cannot fail to strengthen true peace and security.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to thank the Belgian delegation for having taken the excellent initiative to convene this debate. We are prepared to support any future decision the Council might take in response to public opinion on the question of the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Congo for the kind words he addressed to the presidency of the Council.

Mr. Li Junhua (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for his briefing. The Chinese delegation appreciates all his efforts and the work he has done on the ground since taking office. I also wish to pay tribute to the relevant United Nations agencies for their efforts in protecting civilians in armed conflict and in providing other humanitarian relief.

The item on the protection of civilians in armed conflict has been on the agenda of the Security Council for many years, during which numerous resolutions, including resolution 1674 (2006), and presidential statements were adopted. However, in almost every conflict situation, the circumstances of civilians have not been greatly improved. Some conflicts have eluded solution for too long or have escalated, leading to continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation and consequently affecting additional civilians. Refugees and displaced persons have no access to essential relief. Therefore, while it is necessary for the Security Council to respond to a crisis in an integrated manner, addressing legal and political issues, it should also take a tailored approach when addressing a particular situation involving specific issues.

First, the Security Council should faithfully carry out its sacred duty, as provided for by the Charter of

the United Nations, by stepping up efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts. Civilians are the most vulnerable group in armed conflict and no remedial measure can save them from harm when they are caught in an armed conflict. Efforts to prevent or deal with crises will effectively contribute to alleviating the suffering of civilians. Efforts to prevent and reduce conflicts are the best protection for civilians. Meanwhile, together with other relevant bodies, the Security Council should identify and remove the root causes of conflicts so that both the symptoms and the causes of the problem can be addressed.

Secondly, the role of Governments should be given its place in the protection of civilians and should be respected. The Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly all require that Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians. The international community and external players have a role to play in resolving crises by providing help and support. But external assistance should be provided with the prerequisite that the will of the Government concerned must be respected and its sovereignty and territorial integrity preserved, and that no arbitrary intervention should be imposed on the Government concerned over its objection.

Thirdly, the concept of the responsibility to protect should be understood and applied correctly. The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) devoted a large section to comprehensively setting out the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and requested the General Assembly to continue its consideration and enrichment of the concept. At present, there are still differing understandings and interpretations of this concept among Member States. The Security Council should therefore refrain from invoking the concept of the responsibility to protect. Still less should that concept be misused. The Security Council should respect and support the General Assembly in continuing to discuss the concept in order to reach broad consensus.

Fourthly, the effectiveness and credibility of humanitarian relief efforts should be improved. The parties concerned should collaborate in compliance with international humanitarian law. Humanitarian relief efforts are indispensable for minimizing losses and helping civilians overcome difficulty in the aftermath of a crisis. Over the years, humanitarian relief agencies have done a great deal of work in dangerous circumstances to provide relief to civilians in distress. They deserve our appreciation and acknowledgement. But even though the causes of conflicts are complex and sensitive, humanitarian relief efforts should strictly abide by the principle of fairness, neutrality, objectivity and independence, thereby safeguarding the humanitarian nature and credibility of the activities.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): First of all, I wish to express the gratitude of my delegation to Mr. Holmes for his valuable briefing and to the Belgian presidency for organizing this important open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered later this morning by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, I will limit myself to a few additional remarks.

Today's briefing of Mr. Holmes, as well as the observations of the most recent Security Council mission to the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and daily news reports from the Middle East and other places confirm the continued occurrence of gross violations of humanitarian law and human rights, including deliberate attacks against civilians, sexual violence used often as a weapon of war, abductions, recruitment of child combatants and other forms of grave violations, perpetrated by State and non-State actors.

We believe that the international community must do much more to protect the most vulnerable in armed conflicts. There can be no excuse for inaction when thousands of civilians are dying every week as a result of armed conflict. It is clear that despite the existing legal framework for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which was further strengthened last year by the adoption of resolution 1674 (2006), serious gaps remain in the practical implementation of agreed norms and principles, including the responsibility to protect. We welcome and support the intention of the Secretary-General to initiate a discussion among United Nations Members on how to translate that core principle of humanity and human solidarity, which our leaders endorsed at the 2005 World Summit, into concrete action on a global, regional and national level.

In that respect, we were encouraged during last week's discussions between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in Addis Ababa and Accra by the level of commitment on the part of the African Union to deal with the issue of protecting civilians in armed conflict through greater involvement in peacekeeping and mediation efforts in various crisis situations on the continent.

We believe that the partnership, consultations and dialogue between the United Nations and regional organizations on these issues should be further strengthened and expanded, in line with the joint communiqué of the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council. Through joint action, we must find more efficient ways to deal with humanitarian crises such as that in Darfur, where civilians continue to suffer and die every day.

With respect to Darfur, which is the site of one of the world's most grave crises and humanitarian situations, Slovakia welcomes the recent agreement that will, we hope, lead both to rapid and successful deployment of the African Union-United Nations hybrid operation in Darfur and to improved protection of civilians in the region from violations of human rights and humanitarian law. In that regard, we call upon the Government of the Sudan to facilitate deployment of the hybrid peacekeeping force and to allow the monitoring and investigation of crimes, including active cooperation with the International Criminal Court. In addition, we hope that the recent discussion between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council will contribute to closer cooperation and interaction between the United Nations and the African Union in addressing the increased humanitarian suffering of civilians in the Central African Republic, eastern Chad and Somalia, as well as the consequences of criminal activities by the Lord's Resistance Army in the Great Lakes region.

However, we must not forget about people in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East and Afghanistan, where the numbers of attacks on innocent civilians — employing the most vicious killing tactics and terrorist acts, including the use of chlorine — are increasing day by day. We agree with Mr. Holmes that that trend is profoundly worrying. It must be addressed through effective action by all regional and global stakeholders in order to contain it.

We are concerned about the level of impunity with respect to grave violations of humanitarian law and atrocities committed against civilians in armed conflicts. I would like to underline that we are especially concerned about the direct involvement of Government military and security forces and institutions in such criminal activities.

In that regard, Slovakia stresses the need for strict application of a zero-tolerance policy with respect to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Impunity for such crimes is unacceptable, and we must make sure that the perpetrators of criminal acts are brought to justice. In situations where national judicial authorities — who have the primary responsibility for bringing the perpetrators of crimes to justice — are not fully capable or, in some cases, unwilling to address violations of international humanitarian law, Slovakia will continue to support active engagement by the international community, including through international and "mixed" tribunals, the International Criminal Court and, when necessary, applicable targeted measures by the Council in ensuring respect for humanitarian and human rights law.

We are also concerned about the increasing number of deliberate attacks against United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian workers providing assistance to civilian populations, as well as attacks against media personnel. In that respect, we strongly condemn acts such as the recent killing of a staff member of Médecins Sans Frontières in the Central African Republic and of two Lebanese Red Cross workers at a Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon, the brutal killing of a Radio Okapi national reporter in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and attacks against humanitarian personnel and piracy threatening relief deliveries to Somalia.

We support all necessary steps and actions by the international community to protect humanitarian personnel, to establish safe corridors allowing for full and unhindered humanitarian access and to provide basic security for the work of the media, including through full implementation of last year's Security Council resolutions 1674 (2006) and 1738 (2006).

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank and pay tribute to all humanitarian organizations for their relentless efforts and to express our sympathy to the families of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of peace and humanitarian relief.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I wish to align myself with the statement to be made later this morning by the presidency of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for his thought-provoking presentation. It is not acceptable that even now, in the twenty-first century, violent conflict impacts most severely on the civilian population. Helping to ensure the protection of civilians during armed conflict is central to the work of the Council.

In that connection, let me say that we regret the deaths of civilians that have resulted from operations by international forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. Any civilian casualty is one too many. We recognize that it is incumbent on those forces to continue to do everything they can to avoid any civilian casualties, and we remain committed to that.

At the same time, it is important that we all distinguish between these unintended deaths and those resulting from the deliberate and callous targeting of civilians by insurgents and others. The issue is quite simple: we seek to avoid civilian deaths, whereas the insurgents seek to cause them. That goes to the heart of why we are dealing with conflicts in the first place.

Many challenges face us on the ground in such situations. Civilians continue to be deliberately targeted by insurgents, terrorists and others. In many areas of conflict, sexual and gender-based violence is still widespread. The abhorrent practice of using rape as a weapon of war continues. Millions of civilians are or remain displaced from their homes every year, left to lead a fragile and vulnerable existence. We have also heard too many stories over the past few weeks in which humanitarian workers, journalists and others have been attacked, kidnapped or murdered.

All of those things are unacceptable. It cannot be right that civilians continue to bear the brunt of violent conflict. They account for the greatest number of casualties. The most vulnerable — women, older people and children — are hit particularly hard. Let me cite some examples. In Burma, ongoing military campaigns against the insurgents have meant that civilians in conflict areas have suffered the repercussions. In Sri Lanka, the escalation in conflict has brought a high human cost. We remain concerned about the fragile state of security in Somalia and the impact that terrorist violence is having on civilians there.

The United Kingdom has also said many times in this Chamber that the terrible suffering of the people in Darfur has gone on for far too long. We welcome the agreement of the Government of Sudan to a hybrid force. At the same time, we draw attention to the deteriorating security situation in Darfur. We are concerned that humanitarian agencies may be forced to pull out unless there are safety guarantees and unless those responsible for attacks are held to account. We call on the Government of the Sudan to continue to remove bureaucratic impediments to the operations of humanitarian agencies.

The United Kingdom is also deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The recent violence, as has been stated in this Chamber, has had tragic consequences. The United Kingdom fully supports the statement by the Quartet and efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinians. In that regard, we welcome Israel's decision to facilitate humanitarian access and to ensure the provision of basic services.

In conflict situations, all parties must do their utmost to ensure full, safe and unimpeded access to humanitarian and relief agencies. Let me place on record my country's appreciation of and respect for those national and international staff who are prepared to work in the most difficult conditions in order to provide humanitarian relief. I welcome the Saving Lives Together initiative, which aims to improve security arrangements in the field.

It is easy to identify the challenges but much harder to identify what more we can do to try to address them. We should continue to hear the Under-Secretary-General's briefings on protection and country issues. This gives us an opportunity to draw attention to the actions of the worst offenders and to support those who are making progress.

We should strengthen respect for, and enforcement of, international law. We should work towards ending impunity by ensuring that there are no hiding places for the perpetrators of the most egregious crimes. The United Kingdom highlights the important role of the International Criminal Court in that regard and underlines that States with an obligation to cooperate with the Court should do so.

The Council can also continue to ensure that, where appropriate, United Nations peacekeeping forces are given the mandate and support that they need to

protect civilians from violence. We have made gradual progress on this front — for example, we welcome the robust action taken by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) against armed militia that threatened the local population — but more should be done. We can all think back to the time in Bosnia when United Nations forces were not able to protect the population, and we can regret that; but we can help make sure that such an event never happens again by ensuring that all United Nations-mandated forces have the most robust mandate possible. What the Under-Secretary-General said about the need for evaluation of the impact of protection language in peacekeeping mandates is something that we find very interesting and would like to explore further.

Protection concerns, therefore, should be reflected more systematically in peacekeeping mandates. We should encourage and facilitate a closer working relationship between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) on this agenda. We should also continue to work towards better reporting to highlight abuses. In that regard, we very much welcome the Under-Secretary-General's proposal to monitor and report on access issues.

While national Governments have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, the international community also has responsibilities. We should live up to them.

Mr. Tachie-Menson (Ghana): First of all, let me join members in thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Holmes, for his comprehensive briefing.

The question of the treatment of civilians in conflict situations is as old as civilization itself. However, in recent times, the proliferation of brutal conflicts in various parts of the world has focussed the attention of the international community on this problem.

It is clear that the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians lies with States and Governments. That fact was recognized in General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 1991. The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document also affirmed that principle in its paragraphs 138 and 139, which emphasize the responsibility of the United Nations to use appropriate diplomatic and other peaceful means to protect populations at risk, and, failing that, to take collective action under Chapters VI and VII of the Charter to protect civilian populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. That was also stressed by resolution 1674 (2006).

It is therefore undeniable that the international community has the legal and institutional tools to deal with this issue. The challenge for us now is how to translate the mechanisms at our disposal into effective practical systems for the protection of civilians. The problem of the protection of civilians in armed conflict will have to be considered within the context of the following factors: first, prevention of conflicts; secondly, observance and implementation of the rules of international humanitarian law; thirdly, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance; and, fourthly, post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation.

With respect to the first point, it is only logical that, in order to stop the abuse of civilians, we should go to the root of the problem, removing, through conflict prevention, the conditions that breed conflicts in the first place.

In that regard, we are guided by the Secretary-General's report of April 1998 on "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", which identified the promotion of human security and human development as the basis of conflict prevention.

That raises issues related to governance, economic management and the rule of law. As stressed by resolution .674 (2006), there is a need for a coordinated, comprehensive approach on the promotion of economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development in vulnerable areas and regions by the United Nations and its agencies. This also calls for cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

An important aspect of conflict prevention which is often overlooked is an early-warning system. This can operate at two levels: first, to warn of tensions in the community that can trigger conflict; and, secondly, to alert the international community to situations that might lead to an escalation of violence against civilians and result in a humanitarian crisis.

The Peace and Security Council established under the African Union Constitutive Act, which is a collective security and early-warning arrangement, is an example of this. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) early-warning system is also a step in the right direction.

On the question of the observance and implementation of the rules of international humanitarian law, the responsibility lies with the relevant States and combatants. The international community as a whole and regional and subregional organizations, in concert with NGOs, have a role to play in sensitizing the various factions to the need for observance of these rules and in exerting sustained pressure to ensure compliance.

When States and combatants prove unwilling or unable to act, the international community has a moral and legal duty to intervene to avert a humanitarian catastrophe.

Peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance are two important tools currently used by the international community to keep conflicts in check and reduce the scale of human suffering. These two tools, while distinct, are mutually supportive and complementary. To enable peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance to work effectively, it is necessary for peacekeeping missions to be reconfigured through the adoption of robust mandates to ensure not only the physical protection of civilians but also the facilitation of humanitarian assistance. Since the practical and moral underpinnings of peacekeeping operations are imperilled if the local population cannot be protected, the protection of civilians should be part of the core mandate of peacekeeping operations. That requires additional resources. However, this is the most cost-effective way to prevent a humanitarian disaster, which would absorb even more resources.

On the fourth point, concerning post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation, it is important that the international community make available the necessary resources, which would facilitate not only economic reconstruction but also the building of political and judicial institutions that will ensure the rule of law and enable the individual to live in peace and security. In that regard, the importance of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is very clear. Reconciliation and the bringing to justice of those guilty of the most serious crimes should also form part of the nation-building and healing process.

In that context, we are happy to note that the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has become fully operational, can play an effective deterrent role in the promotion of the international legal framework for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The referral of the Darfur situation by the Security Council to the ICC is an important test case in this regard.

Finally, we call on the international community to muster the necessary political will to put in practice the measures necessary for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as I have outlined.

Ms. Qwabe (South Africa): South Africa joins others in thanking you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and we would like to commend the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. John Holmes, for his briefing.

Despite positive political developments in achieving peace in many conflict areas, our world continues to be ravaged by violent armed conflicts that claim the lives of thousands of civilians and leave even more permanently displaced. The deliberate targeting of civilians in armed conflicts, together with the indiscriminate use of force, gender-based violence, forced displacement and the lack of safety and access of humanitarian personnel all have a detrimental effect on civilians.

We are therefore of the view that finding a common solution for the protection of civilians would need the cooperation of each Member State and all parties involved in a conflict. We recognize the need for a coherent, comprehensive and coordinated approach by the principal organs of the United Nations, cooperating with one another and within their respective mandates when dealing with the issue of the protection of civilians. General Assembly resolution 46/182, amongst others, highlights the important value that humanitarian assistance should be assigned in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and, consequently, that assistance should not be given on the basis of geopolitical considerations.

We should therefore avoid the politicization of humanitarian assistance and, in that context, we urge

the international community not to ignore the occupied Palestinian territory in Gaza. Just yesterday, Mr. David Shearer, the head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the occupied Palestinian territory, told reporters at the United Nations that the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip could worsen unless Israel eases the restrictions and closures at its border crossings with the area. South Africa supports the call by OCHA for the reopening of Karni crossing, the main commercial crossing point into Gaza.

It will be recalled that, during its presidency of the Council in March 2007, South Africa convened an open debate on greater cooperation and coordination between regional organizations and the Security Council, in particular the African Union. We believe that the protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance would be better addressed in partnership with regional mechanisms and that strengthening dialogue and cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations would contribute to tackling common security challenges. Furthermore, the role of regional organizations should be strengthened to allow them to act more effectively when future conflicts may arise, as they are closer to the area of concern and can thus, in principle, act more speedily.

As stipulated in Security Council resolution 1265 (1999) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Council has expressed its willingness to consider how peacekeeping mandates might better address the negative impact of conflict on civilians. We are therefore pleased to note that United Nations peacekeeping mandates now include the specific protection needs of women and children, including those of humanitarian personnel, due to the Council's adoption of landmark resolutions 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security; 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict; and 1502 (2003) on the protection of United Nations personnel, associated personnel and humanitarian personnel in conflict zones.

In conclusion, the four resolutions the Security Council has adopted on the protection of civilians in armed conflict have established a good framework for the international community to actively and collectively address the challenges of protecting civilians in armed conflict. Those resolutions reaffirmed the importance of preventing armed conflict and its recurrence, while stressing the need for a comprehensive approach through the promotion of economic growth, poverty eradication, sustainable development, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for and protection of human rights.

In addressing violations of international humanitarian law, South Africa supports the work of the International Criminal Court and the various international tribunals, and believes that all perpetrators, regardless of nationality and geopolitical status, should be properly and fairly tried. It is therefore hoped that the challenges of protecting civilians in armed conflict will be addressed in a way that will increase respect for the principles of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, human dignity and the legitimacy of the United Nations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Holmes for the updated information he has provided on the status of protection of civilians in armed conflict. Not a day goes by that we are not made aware of new instances of killing, torture, cruelty and other forms of violence against civilians in armed conflict.

In recent years, we have focused particular attention on the humanitarian situation in Darfur. However, at present, and due to a large extent to the ongoing and painstaking efforts of the United Nations and the African Union, we have noted genuine prospects for an intensification of the political process, a consolidation of the Darfur peace agreement, and a strengthening of the peacekeeping presence in Darfur. That gives hope that the threat of violence will cease to loom over that region of the Sudan.

Unfortunately, such positive momentum is not yet in evidence in Iraq. Reports of mass casualties have become commonplace. The international community would not yet seem to have grasped the scope of the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Iraq in the course of the conflict, which has already become among the bloodiest of the past 50 years.

Today, we cannot ignore the many years of suffering endured by civilians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The wounds inflicted on Lebanon in the summer of 2006 have yet to heal, and civilian casualties number in the many hundreds.

The number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan is growing. We understand the alarm of the Afghan

Government in reaction to each death among its peaceful citizens.

While responsibility for the protection of civilians falls first and foremost on the Governments of States where conflict is occurring, we believe that such responsibility should also be kept in mind by other parties that might be drawn into various conflict situations.

We are especially aggrieved by the deaths of and injury to children. Just the other day, seven children were killed in the Zargun Shah district of Afghanistan. The Secretary-General, his Special Representative Ms. Coomaraswamy, and the United Nations Children's Fund reacted in a timely fashion. Such events should fall within the purview of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Attention must be paid to gender-based violence. The United Nations must react expeditiously to instances of violence against peaceful civilians and the destruction of civilian sites in armed conflict. This is a most topical issue given that, in many current conflicts, civilian deaths and the destruction of civilian infrastructure are often the result of premeditated actions or of insufficient attention to preventing civilian casualties. We therefore need to strive for strict compliance by all parties with the norms of international humanitarian law and the relevant decisions of the Council.

Conflicts often lead to massive displacements of people within or outside a country. According to data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for the first time in the past five years the number of refugees in the world has increased, rising to almost 10 million. The main cause of that rise is the violence in Iraq, from which approximately 1.5 million people have had to flee, while some sources put that figure at 2.2 million. The need for emergency measures in that context was expressed at the conclusion of the International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in Neighbouring Countries, held in April in Geneva. Afghanistan remains the point of origin of the largest number of refugees, now numbering some 2.1 million.

In recent years, along with the status of refugees, growing attention has been paid to the internally displaced person (IDP), whose status is not regulated by international law. Unlike refugees, IDPs legally continue to be protected by their States. Upon the request of the State, they may be provided assistance by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations.

The issue of IDPs is often linked to the concept of the responsibility to protect, which, we believe, must be interpreted in strict compliance with the 2005 Summit Outcome. We would recall that heads of State throughout the world agreed to help to protect people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, with the understanding that this concept and its implications would be considered by the General Assembly on the basis of the principles of the Charter and international law.

Humanitarian work is a component of a crisis-settlement strategy and post-conflict reconstruction and requires systemic measures at the international, regional and national levels. The Security Council is fully justified in paying greater attention to the protection of civilians as part of its responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a brief statement in my capacity as the representative of Belgium.

As other colleagues have done, I would first like to thank Mr. Holmes for his statement, which illustrated great commitment and spoke to us all.

Belgium would also like to associate itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by our German colleague on behalf of the members of the European Union.

In his briefing, the Under-Secretary-General clearly illustrated that there is still a huge gap between the diplomatic conception of the protection of civilians, on the one hand, and reality on the ground, on the other. In order to bridge that gap, Belgium favours a more concrete, predictable and systematic approach based on the provisions of resolution 1674 (2006) that could provide a better mechanism to enable the Council to carry out an effective policy in the area of both prevention and recovery. It is clear that the Secretariat has a clear role to play. We support all of its efforts and urge it to continue to utilize all means available to it to that end.

Belgium would also like to emphasize that it is above all States themselves that must assume the responsibility to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict. If they do not have the capacity or the will to guarantee adequate protection, then the international community has the responsibility — and even the duty — to respond.

Like Mr. Holmes, Belgium condemns in the strongest terms the refusal to grant access to humanitarian workers in conflict situations. He pointed out that there have been several conflicts on the Council's agenda in which such access has been denied. We have also seen numerous instances of the use of humanitarian assistance for political purposes, which is unacceptable. The Council must use all of its influence in order to guarantee total access in full security for humanitarian staff.

Among the aspects of resolution 1674 (2006), Belgium attaches particular importance to the fight against violence, especially sexual violence against women and minor children. We have noted how such acts of violence become true instruments of war in a number of conflict situations. It is imperative not only to eradicate such practices but also to prevent them.

As the Under-Secretary-General has emphasized, combating impunity is one component of protecting civilians in armed conflict. In that connection, there are a number of legal and reconciliation mechanisms in place at the regional, national and international levels — chief among them the International Criminal Court — that can contribute to ensuring that justice is done. Their effective functioning is clearly a deterrent to those who intend to violate the rights of civilians in armed conflicts.

I would like to assure Mr. Holmes of Belgium's full support in the immense task he has before him.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for following the usual practice of holding two thematic debates annually on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Allow me also to thank Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his timely remarks at the beginning of this debate.

Despite the time that has passed since the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions — 100 years to date — and the August 1949 Geneva Convention, we continue to have to reiterate our concern at the scarce progress made on the ground with regard to providing effective protection for civilians in armed conflict and the urgent need to provide better physical protection to displaced populations and other vulnerable groups at greater risk — such as women and children, humanitarian workers, United Nations staff, journalists and those whose work places them at risk.

In that connection, we regret the recent deaths in Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka, Darfur and Lebanon. We reiterate our condemnation of terrorist attacks against communities, in which no distinction is made between the civilian population and the warring factions. We also condemn all other attacks that have forced the internal displacement of entire communities or caused them to seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

We believe that the holding of open debates on this subject, the statements that are sometimes issued following the debates and the adoption of resolutions, such as resolutions 1674 (2006) and 1738 (2006), among others, represent positive progress in our effort to identify a common understanding as to the best way to jointly confront the challenges repeatedly brought to our attention in the reports of the Secretary-General, reports, incidentally, which are useful tools for gaining a better understanding of the complexities of this issue.

Over the decades, we have together, through the United Nations, been able to address numerous difficult and complex conflicts whose solution has required the adoption of fundamentally important decisions. However, there remains much for us to do before we can achieve comprehensive approaches that will help us to prevent conflicts or their recurrence — approaches in which genuine coherence, coordination and complementarity between the main bodies of the Organization are evident. In that connection, we fully agree with the Emergency Relief Coordinator as to the need to make greater investments in the area of prevention.

For as long as we fail to improve that interaction — whenever a new armed conflict breaks out or when we fail to protect civilians or to ensure the

deployment of humanitarian staff to lend assistance to people trapped in a conflict — every life lost and every case of genocide or ethnic cleansing will remind us that we have yet to achieve the noble ideals upon which the Organization was founded.

Our own experience in Guatemala teaches us that this is no easy task. Despite the progress we have made and the set of peace agreements aimed at establishing a solid foundation for economic growth with fairness, respect and protection for human rights and greater participation for women and indigenous peoples, we nevertheless continue to endeavour to establish, broaden and strengthen institutions, opportunities and guarantees that will bolster national reconciliation, the rule of law and the end of a culture of impunity which has especially affected women and girls.

This difficult experience has enabled us to understand the importance of the just application of the provisions of resolution 1674 (2006), particularly those relevant to the incorporation of the protection of identified vulnerable groups in the planning for peacekeeping missions and other relevant United Nations missions in order to minimize the inherent traumatic impact of any conflict. To this end, we also support the Coordinator's suggestion with regard to assessing the various peacekeeping mandates that already include the protection of civilians and to draw the appropriate lessons from them.

Likewise, we feel that the aide-memoire on the protection of civilians adopted by the Security Council as an annex to presidential statement S/PRST/2002/6, updated by OCHA in 2003 (see S/PRST/2003/27), has been a useful diagnostic tool for assessing the priorities that should be taken into account when establishing, ending or changing mandates for peacekeeping operations. We feel that it could benefit from periodic review and updating in order to better reflect the concerns, trends and measures that must be taken into account for the protection of civilians and the implementation of programmes related to this topic.

We await the Secretary-General's next report, to be submitted in October. We are confident that it will provide up-to-date information and describe recent experiences in peacekeeping operations and in the innovative work in the area of peacebuilding. We are confident that its content will lead to an interesting debate on new approaches to the implementation of programmes on the ground, which will allow us to meet fully our responsibility to protect.

Finally, we would like to end our statement by congratulating the Special Court for Sierra Leone on the conviction of three leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, who were found guilty of 11 crimes considered crimes against humanity, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers. This is the first time that an international tribunal has handed down a verdict on the recruitment of children; it also constitutes a strong message in the struggle against impunity and for the defence of the civilian population.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): Japan is pleased that the Security Council continues to give close attention, as it should, to the plight of civilians in armed conflict. We therefore welcome today's open debate and thank Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for his briefing on the progress that has been made. We commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for playing the leading role in this area.

Indeed, real and concrete progress has in fact been made towards the goal of protecting innocent civilians. The Security Council has adopted a number of normative instruments, including resolution 1674 (2006). With regard to the issue of the protection of journalists in conflict, which was raised in the open debate last December (see S/PV.5577), we welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 1738 (2006).

For Japan, the protection of civilians is a high priority, as we believe it is essential to human security. The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, which is administered by OCHA and to which my Government has made substantial contributions, has accordingly taken great interest in projects that address issues such as conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding, landmines, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, giving support to more than 50 projects over the years. For example, the Trust Fund has assisted in promoting recovery and sustainable livelihoods for that part of the Sri Lankan population which has been affected by internal conflict. Most recently, on 29 May, the Government of Japan and the United Nations decided to extend assistance through the Trust Fund for Human Security to a project that aims at the protection, reintegration and resettlement of IDPs in Somalia. The Central Emergency Response

Fund has also helped to ensure a predictable flow of financing for efforts to protect civilians in neglected crises; we all welcome these efforts.

Today I would like to touch upon four aspects of the subject of protection of civilians. Allow me to start with the Security Council, which we commend for the significant progress it has made in this area. Specifically, the Working Group on children and armed conflict has effected improvements in the situation of children in armed conflict through the monitoring and reporting mechanism which the Council established in resolution 1612 (2005).

At the same time, we are deeply troubled by the large number of civilians affected by conflict — in Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, Somalia and other embattled parts of the world — who continue to be in desperate need of protection and assistance. We deplore the fact that civilians have with increasing frequency become the primary targets of violence, even as we have witnessed a steady decline in the number of conflicts over the past few years. We also condemn the harassment, intimidation and murder of humanitarian workers operating in crises and emergencies around the world.

But condemnation is not enough. World leaders formally acknowledged the responsibility to protect populations at the 2005 World Summit, and it was reaffirmed by the Security Council in its resolution 1674 (2006). Yet, these words have not adequately been translated into action. We need to discuss in this body what other concrete measures the United Nations and the Security Council can take.

One such measure is the aide-memoire adopted by the Council in 2002 (S/PRST/2002/6, annex) as a tool to bridge the normative instruments this Council develops and concrete action on the ground. In particular, it has proven useful in the process of formulating a peacekeeping mandate. This useful tool should not be shelved; rather, it should continue to be put to good use. And to be useful, it should be reviewed and updated from time to time.

Proper monitoring in order to provide early warning is another mechanism in place that contributes to the protection of civilians. Also, timely briefings from the officials responsible, including the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees and for Human Rights, should, therefore, be provided.

Secondly, we need to strengthen our efforts to protect IDPs. We support the recommendation of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence that the humanitarian agencies should clarify their mandates and enhance cooperation in this area. We also welcome the start of informal consultations on humanitarian issues this week. Japan for its part intends to participate constructively in the discussion on this subject in whichever forums it takes place, including OCHA and the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Third is the question of ending impunity. The question of how to strike the proper balance between national reconciliation and punishment of those who have done wrong, and also between peace and justice, needs to be considered further. There can be no doubt, however, that establishing the rule of law contributes greatly to durable peace and to stability. Accordingly, Japan has been taking initiatives in this field. It has actively supported the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in Cambodia, for example, and it welcomes the recent important progress made that brings the commencement of the trial closer. Japan hopes that the trial will proceed smoothly and with all due speed. To that end, it is vital that the United Nations and Member States continue to support Cambodia.

With regard to the International Criminal Court (ICC), Japan has completed the necessary legislative procedures so that it may participate in the ICC, and my country plans to join the Court formally by the fall of this year. In doing so, our hope will be that we can contribute further to the prevention and even eradication of many serious crimes and to strengthening the rule of law and the maintenance of peace and security.

Fourthly and lastly, I would like to underline the importance of regional initiatives to ensure the implementation of normative frameworks and principles relating to the protection of civilians. It is clear that the involvement of relevant regional organizations is desirable and beneficial.

Accordingly, we welcome the regional conference organized by OCHA in April in Dakar. We hope to be able to work with OCHA to hold a similar conference in Asia at an appropriate time.

In conclusion, all of the efforts of the international community for the protection of civilian must ultimately be judged by the number of people

actually protected and saved. Any concrete action that contributes to that ultimate objective should be pursued, including removing anti-personnel mines, ensuring the timely and sufficient delivery of food and medical support to people in distress, exercising maximum care to avoid civilian casualties in counter-insurgency operations and making political efforts to end or contain conflicts. We are also concerned about the humanitarian toll that can result from unexploded cluster munitions. According priority to the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Japan will continue to constructively participate in the discussion on this problem in various international forums.

The protection of civilians must be the concern of all Member States, and the Security Council should therefore continue to act to provide the necessary leadership and to monitor developments closely. I assure you, Mr. President, that Japan will do its part.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, the Argentine delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We would also like to express our appreciation Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his briefing, to which we listened very carefully.

Argentina attaches great importance to the question of the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. We had the honour of being a member of the Security Council when resolutions 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1674 (2006) were negotiated and adopted. Today, those resolutions constitute the legal regime in that area. We understand that the effectiveness of the Security Council in strengthening the protection of civilians is one of the key areas in which international public opinion evaluates the contribution of the Council to the maintenance of international peace and security.

As Mr. Holmes's predecessor pointed out, the responsibility to protect civilians in conflict is a central principle of humanity, which must be depoliticized and transformed into joint action on the part of Security Council members and international organizations.

The fact that, as regular Council assessments have made clear, atrocities against civilians are continuing leads us to consider the possibility of adopting, in the case of certain conflicts, the measures currently envisaged to deal with situations in which States involved in conflict lack the political will or the capacity to take effective action to protect civilians affected by the crisis.

No national security considerations can prevail over the obligation of States and other parties to a conflict to comply with humanitarian law. Argentina appreciates the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and United Nations agencies regarding the protection of civilians, including in the area of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as with respect to women, children and other vulnerable groups, in the context of armed conflict.

My country emphatically condemns attacks against humanitarian personnel and would like to express sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who have so generously sacrificed their lives while assisting people caught up in humanitarian emergencies.

The responsibility of States to protect humanitarian personnel and provide them with full, unimpeded access to the civilian populations affected is clearly established in current law and cannot be denied under any circumstances.

Several years ago, the Security Council included on its agenda the question of the protection of civilians, and it has been establishing a legal regime in that area. In that regard it has had at its disposal such tools as the road map (see S/2001/614), the aide-memoire (S/PRST/2002/6, annex) and the ten-point platform (see S/PV.4877). Furthermore, it has benefited from valuable suggestions for improving the information mechanism for the protection of civilians.

It is now up to us to fully apply that framework. Resolution 1674 (2006) must be implemented and developed. The submission in October of the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians provides OCHA with an opportunity to undertake a detailed assessment of the international situation in that area and to propose new ideas and approaches, as well as specific actions to be taken, including on issues regarding access by humanitarian personnel to populations affected by conflict and the security of

journalists, other media professionals and associated personnel.

In conclusion, we would like to express to Mr. Holmes our gratitude and our best wishes as he carries out his tasks, as well as our commitment to continue supporting OCHA in this and other United Nations bodies.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico would like to express its appreciation for the timely organization of this open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, given the increasing number of civilian casualties in various regions of the world as a result of either collateral damage or deliberate military targeting by groups or other actors in conflict.

As we hold this debate, hundreds of civilians are dying in conflicts as diverse as those in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Gaza Strip, Iraq, Somalia and the Sudan — to mention just a few of the most obvious examples widely covered by the mass media.

In the context of such countless human losses, it is the most vulnerable groups, including women and children, who suffer the effects of armed conflicts. Gender-based violence continues to be an issue of particular concern, as is the fact that women are victims of sexual abuse and that a large percentage of the children recruited by militias are girls, who are also victims of violence and forced labour.

Impunity prevails for those responsible for the many atrocities committed against the civilian population in the vast majority of armed conflicts, given that all too frequently the perpetrators are never brought to justice.

Not only does our Organization have a moral responsibility to eradicate such practices, but, over the past few years, it has also given itself the necessary tools to do so. It is vital that the organized international community send a clear message that it will not tolerate disregard of the basic norms of international humanitarian law or of human rights. My delegation therefore believes that a comprehensive strategy should be put in place to address the most important aspects so as to ensure the protection of civilians in armed conflict, on the basis of the following principles.

First, there must be respect for humanitarian law. It is imperative that the Security Council and the relevant regional organizations require the parties to conflict to abide by the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols, in particular the provisions of common article 3, which already constitute customary law.

Secondly, with regard to strengthening the rule of law and the fight against impunity, the creation of the International Criminal Court represents an unprecedented development because it complements the efforts of national jurisdictions to bring to justice those who commit crimes against humanity. The Court's success is intrinsically linked to the need to prevent the recurrence of deliberate attacks against civilian populations and to prevent that practice in other conflicts. The strengthening of the Court has been reflected in the increasing number of cases under its consideration. We encourage the Security Council to appeal to the Court whenever the particular conditions of a conflict so justify.

Thirdly, with regard to the protection of humanitarian personnel, violence against humanitarian personnel constitutes a war crime and directly affects civilians as it deprives them of the necessary assistance for their survival and consequently increases their suffering. In that regard, it is imperative that the Council ensure that deliberate attacks against humanitarian personnel in the field do not go unpunished and that all parties to a conflict guarantee the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel to affected civilian populations.

Fourthly, concerning the strengthening of coordination and clear mandates, we must encourage broader coordination within the United Nations between the Department for Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and between those parts of the Secretariat and regional organizations, in order to make the protection of civilians in armed conflict a central objective of the respective mandates. That also requires the provision of the necessary resources and staff appropriately trained to respond to the needs on the ground. In the same way, the provisions of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1502 (2003), on women, peace and security and on the protection of humanitarian personnel, respectively, must be systematically integrated into all relevant mandates provided for in resolutions on armed conflict adopted by the Council.

Fifthly, concerning the full implementation of the 10-point action plan, the plan was introduced by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and offers a comprehensive strategy to support the protection of civilians in armed conflict. However, its provisions constitute for the most part a declaration of good intentions, given the few commitments by States towards its implementation. Subjects such as the international protection of internally displaced persons and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in conflicts have not been sufficiently addressed by the international community. Therefore, Mexico considers it important that Member States carefully consider the practical and tangible measures associated with the implementation of the Action Plan.

One of the practical outcomes of the 2005 Summit was the adoption in the Outcome Document of the principle of the responsibility of the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Almost two years later, we have witnessed enormous difficulties in the application of that principle in concrete situations and in translating the spirit that led to its adoption into actions that have a genuine impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. The resolutions adopted on the situation in Darfur illustrate the difficulties encountered in that respect and the diplomatic inertia to which the Secretary-General recently alluded in a press article.

We all know that the debate about the responsibility to protect involves fundamental principles of international law. Despite the consensus reached in 2005, we cannot deny that an atmosphere of mistrust prevails over that subject. While some States see in the new principle the mere continuance of interventionist policies aimed at destabilizing political regimes, others promote its application in a selective manner, limiting its scope to cases significant for their foreign policy interests. For that reason, it is essential that States commit to reaching new agreements that give true content to such an important principle in an objective and impartial manner.

One of the lessons learned from the atrocities of the past decade in the Balkans and Rwanda, among other conflicts, is that the United Nations must not remain passive and indifferent when faced with situations that threaten to become new humanitarian tragedies — hence, the importance of strengthening the response mechanisms of the United Nations in order to combat genocide and other crimes against humanity. Clear rules must be defined, according to which the Security Council would be able to authorize relevant resolutions under Chapters VI or VII to act against such crimes, while guaranteeing respect for international law. That is a task of primary importance for the General Assembly, in which the Mexican delegation is ready to play an active role.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Von Ungern-Sternberg (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). Armenia, Iceland, Georgia, the former Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine align themselves with this statement. I would like to thank the President of the Security Council for the opportunity to discuss this important issue. I would also like to extend our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Holmes, for his very informative briefing.

The EU is deeply concerned about the growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. Right now, we witness yet again the tragedy in the Middle East. The European Union welcomes the approval by the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund of nearly $6 million to Palestinian refugees who are fleeing the fighting in and around the Nahr El Bared refugee camp. The EU is also pleased that, through contributions made by the European Commission and some of its Member States in their national capacity, further funds have been made available. Overall, the Flash Appeal for $12.7 million has been met.

Women, children and other vulnerable groups are especially affected by armed conflict. Sexual exploitation and abuse continue as widespread atrocities affecting millions of victims. It is estimated, for example, that 40 women are raped every day in South Kivu. Such violence is not an inevitable consequence of war, it needs to be prevented. Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel is also unacceptable. The EU welcomes the zero-tolerance policy that has been introduced by the United Nations and has adopted the same in its own European security and defence operations.

The illegal recruitment of child soldiers must end. Currently, an estimated 300,000 child soldiers participate in armed conflicts. Recently, we heard

alarming reports from Sri Lanka. But there are also some encouraging developments: in the Sudan, the Sudan Liberation Movement signed an agreement on 12 June to begin handing over children associated with its armed groups. Previously, similar agreements led to the release of several hundreds of former child soldiers in Cote d'Ivoire. In the Republic of the Congo, United Nations peacekeepers and the Congolese police launched a six-month law-enforcement campaign to improve the protection of children.

The growing number of journalists being killed is also extremely disturbing. Just recently, UNESCO voiced grave concern over the alarming increase in the number of journalists who lost their lives in Iraq in the last month. Security Council resolution 1738 (2006), on the safety and security of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel, has become even more relevant. Equally disturbing is the number of humanitarian personnel being killed. We strongly condemn the recent killings of two workers of the Lebanon Red Cross, of two Red Cross workers in Sri Lanka, of two United Nations workers in Gaza, of a member of Médecins Sans Frontières in the Central African Republic, of a member of Caritas International in Darfur and all other killings of humanitarian personnel.

International standards for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts are largely in place. On 8 June we celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 that are essential for strengthening the protection of civilians Also, international human rights law continues to be applicable in times of armed conflict.

At the 2005 World Summit, heads of State established the responsibility to protect. The EU welcomes the reaffirmation of that responsibility by the Security Council in subsequent resolutions, including resolution 1674 (2006).

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) establishes an enhanced framework for the protection of children in armed conflict. The EU is currently developing country-specific recommendations for its actions in countries in which children are affected by armed conflict. I would like to take this opportunity to recall the important adoption, in February 2007, of the Paris Commitments and Paris Principles against the illegal recruitment of child soldiers.

International humanitarian law urges all parties to allow full, unimpeded access by humanitarian personnel to civilians in need of assistance. Furthermore, all those concerned are encouraged to make available all facilities necessary for the operations of humanitarian United Nations and associated personnel and for promoting the safety, security and freedom of movement of such personnel.

The International Criminal Court, international criminal tribunals and special courts, as well as reconciliation commissions, are working to end impunity. Ending impunity is essential if a society in conflict or recovering from conflict is to come to terms with past abuses.

In 2001, the United Nations adopted a Programme of Action aimed at preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The proliferation and misuse of such weapons constitute the primary cause of civilian deaths. Under German chairmanship, the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, in New York, works closely with the United Nations to identify support for States in their endeavours to reduce and control such arms. In 2005, the EU adopted its own strategy to combat their illicit accumulation and trafficking.

Finally, we need to continue to strengthen these standards and to ensure their full implementation. Let me point out three areas of priority for international action.

First, there must be worldwide recognition of standards. The EU calls on Member States that have not done so to ratify and support the existing conventions and resolutions forming the legal framework for the protection of civilians and to implement them fully within their national legal systems. The EU also calls upon all Member States to abide by and support all resolutions relating to the protection of civilians.

Secondly, there must be clear and sufficiently robust Security Council mandates for peacekeeping operations. As pointed out in resolution 1674 (2006), mandates have to include provisions regarding the protection of civilians within their zones of operation, the facilitation of the provision of humanitarian access and, finally, the creation of conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons. The EU

strongly supports Under-Secretary-General Holmes's request for Council support in situations in which access to humanitarian work is being denied. We also agree that it might be useful to evaluate the practical effects that the inclusion of language concerning the protection of civilians has actually had on the ground.

Thirdly and finally, there must be prevention. Civilian suffering should be prevented in the first place. Early action in the case of simmering conflicts is therefore critical. Timely briefings by the Secretary-General, his Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and other relevant actors are extremely helpful in drawing the attention of the international community to areas where conflicts are prone to erupt.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a complex task. The EU is fully committed to meeting that challenge. In cooperation with the United Nations, the EU continues its work for the promotion of peace and the prevention of conflict so that, one day in the future, human suffering can end.

Mrs. Eilon Shahar (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your able stewardship of the Council during this month and to thank you for convening this debate. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General John Holmes for his informative briefing and to congratulate him and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on their important ongoing humanitarian work on the ground.

Israel assigns vital importance to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and is encouraged by the continued efforts of the Security Council and the Secretary-General and his staff in this area. We believe that all individuals should live without fear of physical, sexual, psychological or other forms of abuse, which stem from or are aggravated by conflict. But, as Mr. Holmes noted, lip service is easy; effective action is much harder. Israel agrees, and I wish to share with members our perspective on the matter.

A quick snapshot of conflicts around the world reminds us of the almost daily violence committed against civilians and of the failure of a number of States to protect their civilians from such immediate threats to life and security, triggered by forces of extremism and instability. Sadly, it is primarily civilians who are caught in the crossfire, bearing the tragic toll of casualties and victimhood.

Civilians are often exploited by their own insurgents who intentionally and cynically choose to operate from densely populated areas, in blatant violation of the basic principle of the distinction between combatants and civilians. The persistent violence and the culture of impunity in Darfur have contributed to the continuation of the dire situation in which rape is used as a weapon of war and sexual and gender-based violence are widespread, including in camps for internally displaced persons. Perpetrators should be brought to justice in accordance with international law and the basic dictates of humanity, and immediate humanitarian action should be enhanced. In that regard, Israel hopes for an immediate deployment of the African Union-United Nations hybrid force to the region to ensure the protection of civilians, who have been denied it for so long.

Similarly, the safety and access of humanitarian personnel and journalists, who work as professional independents, must be ensured. Humanitarian workers provide essential services on the ground, and their vital work must not be hampered. The rise in violence directed at journalists and other associated personnel was addressed by the Council last December in its adoption of resolution 1738 (2006). The Council rightfully took a strong stance in condemning the intentional attacks against journalists, and parties in conflict should be mindful of the obligations in this area. Additionally, the masquerading of terrorists and militants in the vehicles of journalists must be forcefully condemned.

When sovereign States fail to govern responsibly according to their duties under international law, terrorists and other non-State actors seek to take advantage of the void. We have witnessed that deeply troubling phenomenon too many times in our region. This past Sunday, in a moment of déjà vu, we saw rockets once again launched directly at civilians in northern Israel by terrorist factions in southern Lebanon.

Moreover, the blatant disregard of terrorists for the sanctity of human life is a brutal maliciousness that we have seen, even among their own populations. The abuse, manipulation and endangerment of civilians are at the heart of terrorist thinking and tactics. In Lebanon, Hizbullah stored its rockets inside homes and

launched attacks from positions nestled within the fabric of civilian life and in proximity to places of worship and hospitals. In the Gaza Strip, Palestinian terrorists firing Qassam rockets use similar tactics. As we see, terrorists groups such as Hizbullah and Hamas share those tactics.

Additionally, in Gaza we have seen the violence against Israel accompanied by intra-Palestinian violence, with blatant disregard for the rights of civilians caught amid the fighting of warring factions. In this case, civilians are not merely used as shields to mask acts of violence; in actual fact, they are deliberately targeted.

The vigilance of the international community in protecting civilians, particularly in cases where States are not able to do so, must not wane. The international community's choice to deal with these situations could save the lives of countless civilians.

To this effect, there should be greater focus on timely and credible prevention measures, in addition to restorative actions, in order to ensure that humanitarian agencies can be effective in pursuing protection concerns in the field. Effective action also requires consistent follow-up. The Council must be proactive in monitoring the implementation of these resolutions to avert further crises stemming from State neglect.

Israel recognizes that it is the duty of all States, first and foremost, to protect their civilians from all harm. Equally important is the obligation of all States to ensure that attacks are not launched from their own sovereign territory.

Failure to hold accountable terrorist groups, as well as those States which provide safe haven and refuge for them, will only encourage extremists to increase their abuse and manipulation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): Mr. President, my delegation appreciates your initiative to convene this debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, especially at a time when, in spite of the unwavering efforts of the international community to douse conflicts in our society, new cases are rapidly evolving while expectations of dealing decisively with those already ongoing are becoming disappointingly wishful. We also thank Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his comprehensive briefing on this subject.

We believe that the time has come for the international community to re-examine when it is its responsibility to protect civilians, without prejudice to the sovereignty of Member States. The genocide in Rwanda, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and the crimes committed against unarmed civilians in areas of conflict, especially in Africa, serve as a constant reminder that we have to seek a generally acceptable understanding when the international community exercises its responsibility to protect.

We expect that Member States will use this opportunity to reflect and exchange views on the precarious situation of, and daunting challenges facing, unarmed civilians in conflict situations. We acknowledge the fact that non-combatant civilians are increasingly the first fatalities of, and bear the burdens imposed by, armed conflicts, whose causes are usually not of their own making.

In that regard, not only do untimely deaths result from deliberate armed attacks by contending parties seeking to carry out reprisals, but the social, cultural and economic lives of such non-combatant non-parties to conflicts — which include the aged, women, children and youths — are, unfortunately, adversely affected. Civilians often become pawns in this deadly game, which neither has rules nor respects the dignity of persons.

It is inhuman, to state the obvious, that the heavy burdens which conflicts impose on civilians include denial of access to medical care. The situation is even more precarious for people with disabilities, those afflicted with age-related discomforts and others with serious diseases, who, along with the healthy, must endure the burdens associated with refugee status within and outside their countries.

It is therefore the belief of my delegation that this open debate will help the international community to focus attention principally on the urgent task of protecting and safeguarding civilians wherever conflicts erupt.

In that regard, Nigeria welcomes the increased capacity of the African Union to forestall and resolve armed conflicts and protect civilians in war situations through its Peace and Security Council. We also welcome the valuable extension of logistical support

from the United States of America and the European Union to the African Union Peacekeeping Operations in the Darfur region of the Sudan.

We appreciate the renewed United Nations-African Union partnership aimed at identifying specific cases in which the United Nations could, as a matter of improving the African capacity for peace operations, assist the African Union with capacity-building requirements, including in the area of monitoring the conduct of parties to conflicts.

Condemnation by States Members of the United Nations of rape and sexual assault against women, as well as expressions of outrage by human rights advocates as a whole directed at the enlistment of child soldiers into combat, are a veritable and useful means of protecting civilians in conflict situations.

My delegation believes that the expansion of the scope and definition of war crimes and crimes against humanity to include rape, enforced prostitution, trafficking, enslavement and torture has resulted in an increase in the number of persons brought before the International Tribunals for acts committed against civilians in the course of armed conflicts.

In order to strengthen those laudable initiatives, in particular those already embarked upon by the international community aimed at bringing succour to hapless civilians caught up in the tragic consequences of events they have hardly provoked or facilitated, my delegation further wishes to urge those States that have not done so to adopt, ratify or codify in their national laws the various conventions and protocols on the law of armed conflicts and to ensure the implementation of their provisions. That calls for a more results-oriented strengthening of legal frameworks and mechanisms for monitoring and reporting attacks against civilians by States and non-State actors.

My delegation wishes to re-emphasize that another way of protecting civilians from the ravages of armed conflict is through conflict prevention. Experience has shown that it costs less to prevent conflicts than to control them. Within the West African subregion, for instance, in the context of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria has been steadily coordinating initiatives with other member States of the Community in bringing about the peaceful resolution of conflicts within and among the member States and other States contiguous to Nigeria. It makes tremendous positive sense to prevent the civilian casualties that would result were the parties to resort to war.

Unfortunately, conflicts are the inevitable consequence of the diversity of human behaviour. We should therefore always expect them and continue to mainstream civilian protection into United Nations regional peacekeeping operations. More importantly, we should tackle their root causes of conflicts with a spirit of openness, mutual compromise and give and take. By doing so, we can provide rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged and sunshine to the sad — nature's best antidote for trouble.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): I am pleased to speak today on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ).

Let me first thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his very helpful presentation earlier today. His leadership as an advocate for the protection of the displaced and dispossessed is more critical than ever before. We also wish to express our thanks to Belgium for having convened this important debate today.

The protection of civilians is not simply an abstract or theoretical debate for the Security Council. Rather, it remains an essential objective in the context of contemporary conflict. The death and displacement of men, women and children is a deliberate objective of warring parties and terrorist groups. Girls and boys are recruited as combatants; civilians become unwitting targets of suicide bombers; families are displaced from their homes; sexual violence is a deliberate weapon of war; and civilian infrastructure and economies are often shattered.

The consequences of such actions play out daily in the Darfur region of the Sudan and in Afghanistan, Iraq, northern Uganda, Lebanon, Somalia and Sri Lanka, to name just a few. The Council's focus, therefore, on ways in which it can effectively respond to protection challenges remains critical.

CANZ applauds the role that the Council has played to advance international understanding of protection issues and international action on behalf of people at risk. The Council's decisions, in both thematic and country-specific resolutions, have made clear that the plight of civilians must be addressed

effectively as part of any comprehensive international response. But it is vitally important that we continue to bridge the gap between words and deeds.

In Darfur and in Chad, for example, we all have seen an escalation of violence in recent months. CANZ partners condemn the persistent culture of impunity and the increasing attacks on civilians, African Union and United Nations personnel, and humanitarian workers perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. The situation is further compounded by the obstacles to humanitarian access which continue to be imposed by the Government of the Sudan.

We are encouraged by the Government of the Sudan's acceptance of the AU-United Nations hybrid operation and urge all parties to implement an effective ceasefire and facilitate the rapid implementation of that force, which should include a robust mandate for the protection of civilians. We also urge the Sudan to take measures to prevent further violations of human rights, to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice in accordance with international law, and to facilitate urgently needed humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations.

CANZ joins other delegations in calling upon the Government of the Sudan to cooperate with the International Criminal Court. Steps must be taken immediately to secure the arrest and appearance of two named suspects before the Court. We call on the Council to ensure full implementation of existing resolutions, including resolution 1591 (2005), which stipulates that the Sudan must cease conducting offensive military flights over Darfur, and we call upon all parties to the conflict immediately to cease hostilities and actively seek a political solution under AU and United Nations leadership.

In places such as Afghanistan, non-State actors continue to deliberately target civilians, including aid workers. Respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians must remain the priority of the international community. Our resolve to augment civilian protection in the face of such violence must not wane.

Insurgents, warlords and criminals continue to terrorize and victimize civilian populations. In the face of that, CANZ partners are encouraged by the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to adopt more strategic and coherent approaches to civilian protection. Ongoing planning by UNAMA and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to convene a protection of civilians workshop can help create a better understanding of the protection challenges Afghans face and of how actors on the ground can work together better. Clear and mutually reinforcing protection strategies remain an important element of the international efforts to assist Afghanistan in achieving long-term stability and security.

Identifying and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, ensuring that State and non-State actors fulfil their responsibilities towards affected populations and are held accountable when they do not, and developing the tools and strategies needed to help guide international responses stand out as key challenges. There are, however, no quick fixes to those complex problems, but there are practical actions that all Member States can support and where long-term Council leadership is required. I would like to highlight three areas in which strategic and mutually reinforcing investments must be made as part of an international protection strategy.

First is enhancing the evidence base. The 2005 report of the Secretary-General noted that future reports on the protection of civilians would ensure a greater emphasis on empirical information to reflect the effect of conflict on the quality of life and wellbeing of civilian populations. CANZ wholeheartedly supports that approach. We look forward to an indication of progress in the Secretary-General's next protection of civilians report in December.

Monitoring and reporting activities can provide reliable data which assist the Council, in partnership with other actors, to respond to crises with the right tools and in a timely manner. In that regard, and speaking for a moment in my national capacity, let me say that my delegation warmly welcomes the call made this morning by John Holmes for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of protection of civilians mandates on the ground, as well as his proposal more systematically to track instances of internationally restricted humanitarian access and to create an incident-reporting mechanism so that Council members are informed in real time of cases of gravest concern.

CANZ acknowledges, however, that it is risky to collect and report on violations in the field — both for the collectors of that information and for victims. It

can have implications for humanitarian access to affected populations and it can put the safety of United Nations and associated personnel at greater risk of violence. Thus, for monitoring and reporting mechanisms to be sustainable, the Council must be willing to act decisively on the reports it receives and demonstrate that there will be no impunity for attacks against civilian populations.

A second point is that monitoring and reporting can be truly effective only if civilian and military actors have sufficient knowledge of and experience in addressing protection concerns and priorities. Resident and humanitarian coordinators, special representatives of the Secretary-General, and military and civilian personnel deployed as part of international peace support operations all need to understand their roles and responsibilities and the tools at their disposal if they are to ensure that protection needs are being addressed.

Finally, in resolution 1674 (2006) on the protection of civilians, the Council stressed the importance of developing clear guidelines for civilian protection mandates. CANZ urges OCHA and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to make progress in that area and to update Member States on how resolution 1674 (2006) is being implemented in the next Secretary-General's report. Resolution 1674 (2006) also refers to the Council's unique responsibility to protect civilians from the most acute threats to their personal security — genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity — including through enforcement action under Chapter VII. Operationalizing the concept of the responsibility to protect must be the focus of further work by the Council.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, when it comes to the protection of civilians, transforming international legal norms into practice and commitments into action is no easy task. We must therefore be prepared to work diligently and over the long term to achieve those ends. Critical to that effort will be our capacity to maintain momentum within the most senior levels of the United Nations and within the Council to keep this issue at the front and centre of our work. Later this year, the Secretary-General will report to the Council on the protection of civilians. The report will be an important tool to ensure that our collective momentum is maintained and to promote tangible and practical strategies to address emerging protection challenges.

Collectively, we must ensure that populations at risk have access at all times to the greatest protection possible, that perpetrators of abuse will be held accountable for their actions, and that advocacy, monitoring and capacity-building deliver real results and make a positive difference in people's lives. This Council, and indeed the international community as a whole, will be judged on its ability to protect the most vulnerable. It is a challenge that we simply must meet.

Mr. Ritter (Liechtenstein): The formal recognition in the World Summit Outcome of the responsibility of the international community to protect civilian populations when their Governments fail to do so constitutes a major breakthrough in our common endeavour to prevent genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The main obligation for its implementation naturally falls on the Security Council. Diplomatic means such as targeted sanctions and embargoes, used in an effective way, should be employed at an early stage when violations against civilians prevail to signal the concern of the international community and to serve as a first step to protect. Collective action to prevent and respond to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes must not be made impossible by a non-concurring vote of one of the permanent members of the Council. That principle was first proposed by the High-Level Panel established in preparation of the World Summit of 2005 and has been taken up in the proposals on the working methods of the Security Council presented to the General Assembly last year that were prepared by the group of five small nations, to which we belong.

The rest of the United Nations membership also has a role to play in making the responsibility to protect operational, in that they can bring situations to the attention of the Security Council in open debates and through other means, such as consideration in the General Assembly. Furthermore, article 8 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide allows any contracting party to call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take appropriate action.

The decision of the 2005 Summit is complementary to earlier resolutions of the General Assembly, such as Assembly resolution 46/182, which

stresses the primary, although not exclusive, responsibility of national authorities to protect their own populations. The principle of the responsibility to protect reaffirms that primary responsibility and complements it with the role of the international community when that responsibility is not met. That resolution also calls upon all States whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance to facilitate the safe access of humanitarian actors to such people. All too often, that fundamental principle is neglected. Humanitarian access to the vulnerable is a vital stepping stone to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Where national authorities are unable or unwilling to ensure that such access is granted and respected, the Security Council must step in to create and maintain the operational space needed by humanitarian actors to provide assistance. In many situations, security is so precarious that humanitarian workers remain at considerable risk of violence. That is where the role of the Security Council in defining and facilitating the tasks and capacity of peacekeepers is crucial. At the same time, wider acceptance of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, which provides for substantial expansion of the scope of legal protection for such personnel, is urgently needed.

International protection for civilians, whether by peacekeepers or humanitarian workers, can only be an interim response. Without political solutions, civilians continue to suffer and humanitarian workers are faced with open-ended displacement. Liechtenstein supports the idea of strengthening the mediation capacities of the Department of Political Affairs. The early use of the Secretary-General's good offices can be an important tool for a comprehensive preventive approach to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We consider mediation to be a core activity of the United Nations, in accordance with its purposes and principles.

An unequivocal and firm stance by the Security Council that there will be no impunity for the deliberate targeting of civilian populations would have a strong deterrent effect in any situation, and thus also serve as a very useful prevention tool. Prevention is indeed a key aspect of the protection of civilians. Preventive action can, however, be effective only if it is made clear that abuses against civilian populations, which are often carried out against their most vulnerable members, in particular women and children, are violations of international law that will not go unpunished.

In that context, Liechtenstein wholeheartedly welcomes the first convictions for the recruitment and use of child soldiers rendered by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. That constitutes another significant step in the area of international criminal justice, which has expanded very rapidly, and is one of the most important developments in international relations over the past two decades. That historic judgement also strengthens the role of the Security Council its fight against impunity. We believe that the International Criminal Court (ICC) must play the central role in the efforts of the international community to end impunity and hope that the Security Council will give its full support to the ICC in that respect.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choi Young-jin (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This issue is indeed a major concern of the international community, especially in an era when intra-State conflicts stemming from ethnic, religious and cultural differences have become more frequent and more common than ever. My appreciation also goes to Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his comprehensive presentation on this important issue.

Since the introduction of the topic of the protection of civilians in armed conflict into the Security Council in 1999, progress has been made on this issue. In particular, the adoption of resolution 1674 (2006) last year was a significant step forward, reinforcing the legal framework established by previous resolutions on the subject. Despite the continued efforts of the United Nations, however, it remains a sad reality that civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict and terrorism. The world still continues to witness massive human rights violations, unconscionable violence and brutal killings. In both international and civil conflicts, the international community today has become increasingly aware of its responsibility to protect civilian populations.

My delegation would like to emphasize three issues that we believe are particularly important to the protection of civilians: conflict prevention, the

development of a specific mechanism for the protection of civilians in each armed conflict and the elimination of the culture of impunity.

Needless to say, the best way to protect civilians from the dangers of armed conflict is to prevent armed conflicts from erupting. It is therefore of the utmost importance to develop a broad strategy for conflict prevention that addresses the root causes of armed conflict. In dealing with these causes, the question of good governance should be a critical concern for the international community. Any strategy for prevention will also need to be based on solid analysis of both ongoing and newly emerging situations that have the potential to develop into armed conflict. The Security Council has a significant role to play in this regard.

Secondly, while a generalized approach is needed, we are of the view that because each conflict is unique, the Council should develop a mechanism for a case-by-case analysis for the protection of civilians. A specific mechanism should be in place to analyse the particular characteristics of each armed conflict and develop an individualized approach to the protection of civilians. In our view, to be effective, such a mechanism would require a strong system of information-sharing among all relevant actors, including peacekeepers and humanitarian non-governmental organizations on the ground.

Thirdly, to deter the recurrence of crimes against innocent civilians, the culture of impunity must be brought to an end. The establishment and operation of the International Criminal Court, the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the Special Court for Siena Leone have great significance in this regard. Also crucial to ending impunity is providing assistance for judicial capacity-building in war-torn societies, with a view to ensuring that law and order are restored.

Today's topic, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, is a current and compelling security concern that requires coordinated multilateral action from the international community. We are still distant from translating our responsibility to protect into adequate action. Beleaguered communities still suffer. It is therefore important that we build upon the progress already made and strengthen our efforts to achieve a more secure and orderly world in which every human being is respected and protected within a culture of peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): The Rwanda delegation commends you, Mr. President, for convening this important open debate of the Security Council to discuss the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We would like to join other delegations in expressing our thanks to Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his briefing.

The Rwanda Government condemns in the strongest terms the deliberate targeting of civilians in conflict. Rwanda fully supports Security Council resolutions on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The most serious crimes in situations of conflict are committed against poor, defenceless and voiceless people, often living in remote locations far from the sight of the international community and the media.

It is for such people that the implementation of resolutions 1674 (2006) and 1738 (2006) is most urgent. Despite these resolutions, and despite the endorsement by all States at the 2005 World Summit of the principles of the "responsibility to protect", which my Government strongly supports, too many people continue to suffer unspeakable horrors in situations of armed conflict. It is clear that much more needs to be done, particularly by this Security Council, which is the Charter-mandated body responsible for international peace and security.

We believe that our common humanity should unite us in the resolve to put an end to the suffering of millions of people who live in, and are threatened by, situations of conflict. This resolve entails national Governments taking full responsibility to protect civilians, and, where they are unable or unwilling to do so, the international community acting through the Security Council to take appropriate steps to provide such protection. It is essential that, in taking such actions, the Security Council be seen as consistent and just, acting in the best interests of the international community, and that it show special concern for those who are most defenceless and vulnerable and most in need of protection from the international community. It was, after all, to protect such defenceless people that, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the United Nations and its Security Council were established.

Let the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and other similar situations, serve as a lesson that when the United Nations, and specifically the Security Council, fails to take appropriate, timely and decisive action to provide protection for people under threat, the consequences are catastrophic.

Finally, we would once again point out that the Interahamwe militia, which was responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, remains active in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where they continue to terrorize, murder and rape innocent civilians with impunity. It is inexplicable that, 13 years after the Rwanda genocide, and despite the numerous commitments of the international community to prevent and combat genocide and to protect civilians in armed conflict, this force continues to kill innocent civilians. The presence in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the largest peacekeeping force in history has equally failed to address this problem. We call upon this Council to address the issue urgently.

The President: I now call on the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Wai (Myanmar): Mr. President, I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in today's open debate on this important subject. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Holmes, for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

Armed conflict breeds a cycle of violence and brings untold suffering to innocent civilians. Armed conflict is exacerbated by the easy availability of illicit small arms and light weapons. Every year, some 300,000 civilians are killed by small arms and light weapons in armed conflict. Every day, some 1,400 civilians die in armed conflict because of the easy availability of small arms and light weapons. One of the most effective ways to protect civilians in armed conflict is to have a legally binding international instrument prohibiting the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons with non-State actors.

The United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1674 (2006), which condemns in the strongest terms all acts of violence or abuse committed against civilians in situations of armed conflict. Myanmar joins the international community in condemning all such acts. We are in full sympathy with victims of armed conflict in various parts of the world, because we ourselves have gone through the bitter experience of insurgent groups committing atrocities against our civilian population.

Soon after attaining independence, Myanmar had to face numerous insurgencies. Until recently, there were 18 insurgent groups in the jungle. My country continues to face a situation where the insurgents deliberately target civilians. Throughout the various periods of the insurgency, our civilian population has suffered much at the hands of the insurgents.

I wish once again to stress our strong belief that the most efficient way to protect civilians in armed conflict is to resolve the root causes and bring armed conflict to an end. Therefore, the Myanmar Government has embarked on a national reconciliation process and has been successful in bringing 17 out of the 18 insurgent groups back to the legal fold. As a result, some 100,000 former armed insurgents are no longer fighting against the Government. The only major armed group left is the Kayin National Union (KNU). The Government continues to invite the KNU insurgents to come back to the legal fold.

In the past, we encountered difficulties in our discussions with the KNU because of some outside interference that hindered the peace process. However, we are gratified that, as a result of the Government's continued efforts to bring about national reconciliation, we were able to reach a peace agreement with an important faction of the KNU/Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) in February 2007. Led by the Chairman of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council, 320 members returned to the legal fold after the successful conclusion of peace negotiations. The Government will continue its endeavours to negotiate with the remaining faction of the KNU to return to the legal fold, to join hands with the local populace in developing their region.

We categorically reject the groundless accusations that the Government targets the civilian population. Even with respect to the insurgents, we conduct counter-insurgency operations only against those KNU elements that engage in terrorist activities. In the Kayin state, where the KNU has not conducted its insurgent activities, the Government does not conduct counter-insurgency campaigns. It is only towards those elements of the KNU and the self-styled Shan State Army South who are carrying out terrorist activities against civilians that the Government

conducts military operations. We will not tolerate terrorism under any guide or pretext; nor should anyone else do so.

We continue to strongly believe that a comprehensive approach aimed at promoting economic growth, eradicating poverty and bringing about sustainable development and national reconciliation would go a long way towards putting an end to armed conflict. Based on that conviction, the Government has, in the past decade, spent more than 97.69 billion kyats and more than $550 million to develop the border areas where most of our ethnic nationalities reside.

The Myanmar Government will also do its national duty to protect its citizens and to bring peace, stability and prosperity to the country.

The President: I invite the representative of Colombia to take the floor.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to convey to you, Sir, my delegation's appreciation for the work that you have been carrying out as President of the Security Council for this month. We would like also to thank Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his briefing.

International humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and its two Additional Protocols, establishes clear provisions with regard to the protection of civilians, the issue the Council is considering today. The Government of Colombia shares the concerns expressed with regard to violations of those norms and reiterates its firm commitment to them.

In that connection, we would like also to stress several aspects of the issue. In keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international humanitarian law, Governments bear primary responsibility to protect civilians, while United Nations agencies and other international community actors can provide support for the implementation of existing provisions. That should be done in keeping with State sovereignty and in accordance with guidelines provided by the Government in question. In that respect, it is important to draw a clear distinction between the protection of civilians and the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Colombia appreciates the work done by the United Nations agencies in the area of humanitarian assistance, and we stress the importance of such work being carried out on the basis of the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity and independence. That will enable us to guarantee the humanitarian character of any operation of that type. We would like also to underline the importance of prevention-related activities as the most effective way of protecting populations. Efforts to that end should focus on providing such populations with a favourable and secure environment so that they can improve their living conditions.

My delegation likewise wishes to make a few comments with regard to the reference to Colombia in the statement made by the Under-Secretary-General, referring to situations in which civilians have been the deliberate targets of acts of violence, resulting in a climate of fear and in destabilization. With respect to Colombia, my delegation would like to make it clear that reference must be made to situations in which crimes were committed by violent groups acting on the margins of the law. In his briefing, the Under-Secretary-General referred to assassinations, disappearances and other violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law committed by armed persons, without making it clear exactly to which actors he was referring. This should not be understood as alluding to the legitimate armed forces of the Colombian State, which are working daily to improve the security and stability of the country and to protect the population from the criminal acts of violent groups.

As we have stated in the Council on previous occasions, specific incidents of violence have been caused by illegal armed groups, financed by illicit activities such as drug trafficking, and have claimed civilian victims. My Government, which was democratically elected, remains firmly committed to the promotion of comprehensive policies aimed at restoring security throughout our national territory. Since 2002 those policies have enabled us to reduce criminality across the board and to bring about stability and trust and create new conditions conducive to the effective protection of the population.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor once again to Mr. Holmes to respond to comments made.

Mr. Holmes: I shall be brief, given the hour. I have listened very carefully to the debate and to all the comments that have been made, and I welcome, above all, the commitment to this agenda of the protection of civilians; the recognition, I think, by all speakers of the need to do more to turn our words into deeds now and in future; and the general recognition that we need to be even more proactive than we have been in the past, not least in the field of conflict prevention.

I should like also to take this opportunity to thank all those speakers who have paid tribute and recognition — here I am speaking on behalf of the humanitarian community as a whole — to humanitarian workers in the field, and the recognition of the sacrifices that they have to make, including, on too many occasions, the ultimate sacrifice.

Let me reassure those who have raised the point that, of course, I fully recognize the distinction between the deliberate targeting of civilians and other actions which result in civilian deaths. There is, of course, a heavy obligation on the part of those who are using force in areas where civilian populations are present to do everything possible to avoid those civilian deaths. Let me add that I also take full note of the statement made just now by the representative of Colombia.

Let me thank several Member States for the support they gave to the ideas that I put forward in a preliminary way with regard to taking a more systematic look in the future at the effect of the inclusion of protection concerns in peacekeeping mandates and what effect those have had on the situation on the ground and, similarly, to looking systematically and regularly at cases of denial of access for humanitarian workers, which, as many speakers have commented, is a fundamental point if we are going to do our job of attempting to protect civilians. I will look at how we can take these ideas further.

I have also taken note of, and we will follow up on, other suggestions that were made during the debate, including some for the next report of the Secretary-General, in October.

I note in particular: the suggestion by the representative of Canada, speaking on behalf of Australia and New Zealand as well, regarding a better evidence base to enable us to measure progress towards protection objectives; the idea of looking at how far we are succeeding in implementing resolution 1674 (2006) on the protection of civilians; the idea of an annex to the Secretary-General's report precisely on issues of access, which I have already mentioned; and the suggestion that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should cooperate even more closely than we do already on the question of peacekeeping mandates to ensure that protection concerns are fully included — and let me assure the Council that that cooperation is already extremely good.

The representative of Japan suggested that there could be an updating of the aide-memoire adopted by the Council on the protection of civilians. I think that is a good suggestion which we might try to take up, perhaps during 2008. There was also a suggestion, I think by the representative of the Republic of Korea, that there should be a specific mechanism to look at how we deal with the protection of civilians in each particular conflict — to look at the specificities of each case. I agree that that is a suggestion worth taking up.

Several speakers referred to the importance of the role of regional organizations in the protection of civilians. I agree that that role is important — and, indeed, increasingly important. I pay tribute to the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States to recognize the importance of the protection of civilians in their political reconciliation efforts in various conflicts in Africa. I think the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in this area is increasingly important for the future; it was recognized as such in the recent agreement. As one or two speakers mentioned, we held a high-level conference in Dakar this year, on capacity-building precisely for these kinds of objectives. We would certainly be willing to repeat that in other regions.

Several delegations referred to the current humanitarian issues in Gaza. I fully recognize the seriousness of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We, together with our representatives on the ground, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and others, are making every effort to ensure that the crossings can be opened as soon as possible. Without full opening of the crossings, in particular the Karni crossing, we face the possibility of a

humanitarian crisis in Gaza in a few weeks' time because of lack of food and lack of medical supplies. Some supplies are getting through at the moment, but they are certainly not sufficient to deal with the problem. We are fully focused on that, and I can assure the Council that we will do our best to make sure that we can resolve those issues quickly.

Several representatives mentioned the responsibility to protect and the agreement on that at the 2005 World Summit. Delegations mentioned it in different ways, which perhaps illustrates the complexity of this debate and the complexity of the discussion we face on how to implement the responsibility to protect. This is a debate which we clearly need to continue, and it will be continued this year, as already promised. I think my only comment would be that, in debating this issue, we should not focus too exclusively on the possible actions of last resort in the responsibility to protect. There are many stages before that in helping countries to exercise their responsibility to protect their own civilians.

Finally, let me just repeat that I think it is clear from the debate that this is an issue of great concern to many Member States, and justifiably so. I take away the message that we need to go on looking for new ways to take effective action to protect civilians in armed conflict. As several members pointed out, this is an important criterion for judgement of the efficacy of the Security Council itself. Of course, it was very useful to have a reminder from the representative of Rwanda of what it is we want to make sure to avoid in the future.

Let me conclude by saying that I recognize my own responsibility in this area and that I will do my best to fulfil it.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Holmes for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5704

Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

5704th meeting

Monday, 25 June 2007, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. De Gucht	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Tachie-Menson
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Peru	Mr. Ruiz Rosas
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

07-39295 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Colombia, Lebanon and Spain, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Ziade (Lebanon), Ms. Pajin Iraola (Spain) and Ms. Blum (Colombia) took seats at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

(*spoke in English*)

"The Security Council condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist attack on 24 June near the town of Khiyam in south Lebanon, which targeted the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and killed six United Nations peacekeepers of the Spanish contingent.

"The Security Council extends its deepest condolences to the families of those victims, who included Colombian nationals.

"The Security Council notes the condemnation of this attack by the Government of Lebanon and commends the determination and commitment of the Government of Lebanon to bring to justice the perpetrators of this attack.

"The Security Council reaffirms its full support to the Lebanese Government and army in their efforts to ensure security and stability throughout Lebanon.

"The Security Council appeals to all parties concerned to abide scrupulously by their obligation to respect the safety of the UNIFIL and other United Nations personnel, including by avoiding any course of action that endangers United Nations personnel and by ensuring that UNIFIL is accorded full freedom of movement throughout its area of operations.

"The Security Council reaffirms its full support to the UNIFIL in carrying out its mandate to assist in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and expresses its strong appreciation to Member States contributing troops."

(*spoke in French*)

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2007/21.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5705

Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

5705th meeting

Monday, 25 June 2007, 10.20 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. De Gucht	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Tachie-Menson
	Indonesia	Mr. Pratomo
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Peru	Mr. Chávez
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security: natural resources and conflict

Letter dated 6 June 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General on natural resources and conflict (S/2007/334)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

07-39337 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10:25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security: natural resources and conflict

Letter dated 6 June 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General on natural resources and conflict (S/2007/334)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Angola, Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Germany, Iceland, India, Japan, Liechtenstein, Norway, Pakistan, Senegal, Switzerland and Tunisia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the General Assembly, and His Excellency Ambassador Dalius Čekuolis, President of the Economic and Social Council.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. I should like to draw the attention of members of the Council to document S/2007/334, containing a letter dated 6 June 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on natural resources and conflict.

I shall now make an introductory statement in my capacity as the representative of Belgium.

I thank participants for coming here and agreeing to participate in this open debate on natural resources and conflict, a subject that I hold particularly dear.

Here are, in a few words, the reasons why Belgium wished to organize this debate. In countries rich in natural resources, the revenue derived from the sale of raw materials is essential for growth and development and thus contributes to peace and stability. Unfortunately, experience shows us that the exploitation of these resources can also become a factor that magnifies conflict, both directly, owing to armed conflicts relating to the ownership and distribution of revenue, and indirectly, because in fragile countries a dependence on natural resources leads to an increased risk of weak governance and poor economic performance. All of these factors contribute to conflict-prone environments.

Natural resources can also be a means for conflict, allowing armed groups to finance their activities. These links between natural resources and conflict have been noted in several crises that have been in the forefront in the last few years, particularly in Africa. I myself was made aware of this problem, in particular, through our diplomatic action in Central Africa.

The question of the role of natural resources in armed conflict is not a new one; the Security Council has been faced with it for several years. The Council has responded by imposing embargoes on certain commodities and by requesting sanctions committees and groups of experts to study this aspect of certain situations on its agenda. A number of peacekeeping operations have also incorporated the issue of natural resources into their work.

However, the debate so far has focused only on certain countries and been limited to specific aspects of the question. The Council has not undertaken a horizontal reflection process on this dimension of its work. It is time for us to focus on the lessons learned from its experience and on means of strengthening the effectiveness of the Council's instruments.

Moreover, a number of the countries most affected by the problem are now emerging from conflict. Here I am thinking in particular of Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This raises fresh questions for the international community and for the Security Council in particular.

There has been a growing awareness of the fact that in order to avert any relapse into acute conflict, it must be ensured at an early stage that in the affected countries natural resources play their rightful role, which is to serve as a source of wealth and development rather than of instability.

Various initiatives exist with respect to that general objective, such as the Kimberley Process for diamonds. A more recent one, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which is aimed at enhancing the transparency of the revenues of extractive industries, is based on that same logic. Here let me also mention the International Tropical Timber Organization, which has programmes to combat illegal trade. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has developed guidelines aimed at increasing the private sector's awareness of its responsibilities. The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme are increasingly taking this issue into account in their activities in resource-rich countries.

Thus today's debate is an opportunity also to focus on the linkage between the actions of the Security Council and the aforementioned efforts of the international community, in particular in countries emerging from conflict. We must ensure a smooth transition from a logic of sanctions, which is appropriate in periods of acute conflict and which is dictated by security considerations and managed by the Council, to a logic of reconstruction, in which the goal is to help a country recover and make optimal use of its sovereignty over its natural resources, and where other actors take over.

I am convinced that we will have a fruitful debate on this issue.

I now have the honour to give the floor to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who will speak on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Pascoe: Mr. President, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before the Security Council today. This is an important topic and an important issue for debate. As the Council recognized in resolution 1625 (2005), there can be no question that there often exists a close link between illegal exploitation of natural resources and conflict. The question before us is: What can we do about it?

In too many cases, the illegal exploitation of natural resources has triggered, exacerbated and prolonged armed conflict. The connection can be quite complex, and it is not limited to one region or one economic commodity. Nor is it limited to one phase of conflict.

Solutions must take all of these issues into consideration. With good governance and effective measures to ensure accountability and transparency, natural resources can be a great boon to a country and contribute to peace and development. We need to work actively to ensure that those factors are in place. A wide range of actors will have to be involved.

As the Council is aware, I have just returned from Somalia, where food and water insecurity, combined with intra- and inter-clan rivalries and a legacy of poor governance, have left the country mired in violence. The proposed National Reconciliation Congress may be the best chance Somalia has had in the last 15 years to start moving forward. But we must not neglect the crucial issue of natural resources as we seek to assist Somalis in this important process.

Likewise, the African Union and the United Nations are embarking on a new effort to assist the parties in Darfur to conclude a political settlement and, as a recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme pointed out, it would be remiss of us to ignore the environmental underpinnings of that crisis.

In Afghanistan, the drug economy represents a fundamental threat to the still-fragile political, economic and social institutions established according to the 2001 Bonn Agreement. While progress is required on all fronts — political, military and regional — no solution will be possible without making fundamental progress on eliminating the drug economy.

As the international community faces those challenges, we can draw on many lessons from the past decade. Thanks in part to the efforts of the Security Council, we have gained important practical

experience in the context of sanctions regimes and peacekeeping, on which we must build.

The imposition of targeted sanctions in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, backed in many cases by the appointment of expert groups to monitor compliance, has yielded a wealth of knowledge about conflicts themselves and about the broader phenomenon of how they are fuelled by the illicit extraction of natural resources. As the Secretary-General noted in his 2006 report on the prevention of armed conflict, we must make better use of the knowledge gleaned from sanctions experiences. That knowledge can be invaluable in enhancing the quality of our crisis-prevention work.

The Department of Political Affairs continues to play a fundamental role in assisting Member States to improve the effectiveness of targeted sanctions. As Council members are aware, my department provides substantive servicing to sanctions committees and supports the work of the various expert groups and panels. Targeted measures imposed by the Security Council are playing a crucial role in sustaining peace processes, especially in the post-conflict peacebuilding phase, as in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Although peacekeeping operations are of limited duration with explicit mandates, if they have adequate resources they can play a vital role in monitoring developments on the ground, enforcing sanctions and embargoes and supporting State capacity in that area. In Liberia, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) worked diligently to support Government compliance with the Kimberley Process, a prerequisite to removal of the embargo on rough diamonds, and supported the development of a national forestry reform law that allowed for the lifting of timber sanctions in September 2006. Moreover, while the diamond sanctions were lifted in April 2007, the most recent Security Council resolution — resolution 1760 (2007) — provided for a continuation of the mandate of the group of experts.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) has been helping to restore stability to the resource-rich Democratic Republic of the Congo, working with the Panel of Experts. However, the scale of illegal exploitation of natural resources far surpasses MONUC's resources.

Neither sanctions nor peacekeeping operations alone can produce sustainable solutions to this problem. What is required is a commitment on the part of all stakeholders to the equitable sharing of natural resources and to good governance, accountability and transparency.

I have already alluded to the critical role that natural resources often play in creating crises inside and between countries. Our crisis-prevention strategies must be greatly enhanced to include the capacity to deal with natural resources issues early on.

The issue of natural resources management should also be addressed during peace processes and in constitutions. The fledgling mediation support capacity in our department is working to develop operational guidance for mediators on this question and will include this expertise in the planned standing team of mediation specialists. However, any agreements on the management of resources will remain on paper only if they are not accompanied by the necessary capacity. We need to build the national capacities of vulnerable countries to establish effective economic governance, as with Liberia's Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP).

Good governance and transparency are required not only of Governments in whose territory the illegal exploitation is taking place, but also of Governments in a position to police the activity of those engaged in illegal exploitation and illicit trade. For instance, while the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must live up to its commitments under the governance contract, which promises improved stewardship of the country's resources, international support for its efforts will be critical to success.

Translating those types of commitments into action requires a comprehensive approach that draws together the technical and financial resources of development agencies, regional diplomacy and international commodity-specific monitoring and certification schemes.

Regional approaches are key, given the cross-border dimension of the trade in illicit resources. I welcome new regional initiatives, such as the December 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which

includes a Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources. The Pact needs to be brought into force as quickly as possible. Another example is the Gulf of Guinea Commission, which brings together all oil-producing countries of the western African coast and will address specifically issues of natural resources and security.

We must also continue to encourage efforts — working with regional organizations, Member States and non-governmental organizations — to regulate business practices and promote corporate social responsibility in conflict-prone environments, not just with respect to specific industries but across the board. The Global Compact seeks to do exactly that, and encouraging lessons have been learned from existing initiatives, such as the Kimberley Process and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. I welcome the recent admission of Liberia to the Kimberley Process and hope to see the Process further strengthened through better monitoring, stronger verification and increased transparency.

Finally, we must not overlook the potential for the natural resource challenge to provide opportunities for cooperation and the defusing of political tensions. The management of shared water resources can be a powerful force for peace. One example is the Nile Basin Initiative, which includes institutions for joint problem-solving amongst the 10 riparian countries.

Equitable and accountable natural resource management is a key element of an effective State and must be a critical element of our efforts in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development. A coherent and consistent United Nations approach to natural resource management therefore is essential and will have a critical role to play in the Organization's peace, security and development activities. We look forward to working closely with the Security Council on that issue in the months and years to come.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the General Assembly.

Ms. Al-Khalifa (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to address the Security Council once again at an open debate. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the President of the Security Council for the month of June 2007, Mr. Karel De Gucht, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, for inviting me to participate in today's substantive debate.

At the outset, I would like to stress that my participation in today's thematic debate, in my capacity as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, confirms the need for greater cooperation and coordination between the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, representative, and policymaking organ of the United Nations, on the one hand, and the Security Council as the organ with the primary responsibility for issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security, on the other.

In that context, I welcome this opportunity to provide the Council with the perspective of the General Assembly regarding the issue at hand. I believe that the various and complex aspects of the relationship between natural resources and conflict should be addressed through the collaboration of all organs, namely, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

I wish to commend the Kingdom of Belgium for the concept paper it has prepared to serve as a basis for our discussions in today's debate under the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: natural resources and conflict".

The linkages between natural resources and growth and development cannot be overstated. Furthermore, the linkages between natural resources and the potential conditions for conflict are becoming ever more apparent and better documented.

One very important aspect in that regard is the ownership of natural resources and their revenues. Questions relating to the distribution of revenues among the various national groups in many countries provide fertile environments for initiating or prolonging conflicts. Furthermore, overdependence on natural resources is not conducive to viable development strategies in many poor countries and may lead to the eruption of internal conflicts. While I agree that there must be a distinction between the successive phases of a conflict, we must all agree on the responsibilities of Member States, as well as of the various organs of the United Nations, to deal with those phases.

The sustainable and equitable management of natural resources lies at the heart of today's debate. I

agree with the idea set forth in the concept paper to the effect that improving management of natural resources in the absence of conflict is not the primary responsibility of the Security Council. While respecting the sovereign rights of all Member States, we have to encourage a more rationalized and effective use of natural resources. That has to be clearly linked to the development agenda of the international community.

In post-conflict situations, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should collectively and clearly debate on how best to develop, through the Peacebuilding Commission, a development-oriented approach to foster the factors of stability and prosperity and to prevent the relapse of countries into conflict.

We all stand to gain from working together to address the many aspects of this issue. Member States, the United Nations, regional organizations and groupings, the private sector, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations have a role to play in the different phases of addressing the issue. The Kimberley Process provides a good example of how everyone can work together to stop the illicit trade in natural resources — especially, in this instance, of conflict diamonds.

I look forward to seeing the results of the deliberations of today's thematic debate, which I hope will provide an important input into the collective work of the United Nations and all its organs on the issue of natural resources and conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Dalius Čekuolis, President of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Čekuolis: I would like to thank the Belgian Government for taking the initiative on this very important issue.

The economic and environmental dimensions of conflict are sometimes overlooked, but they should never be underestimated. Today's timely debate on the nexus between natural resources and conflicts serves as an important step in advancing a broad understanding of how Governments, the appropriate multilateral bodies and businesses can improve the management of natural resources and contribute to peacebuilding efforts and the maintenance of peace and security.

Access to natural resources has been a source of conflict throughout human history. In the modern world, the State has aimed to mitigate its potential for causing conflict by regulating access to, and trade in, natural resources. That, however, is a complicated endeavour. The exploitation of natural resources can evolve into a cause of conflict, fuelling and prolonging it in a complex cycle. The twin role of natural resources in fuelling and motivating conflicts is being increasingly recognized in strategies for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. However, at the same time, we recognize that every conflict, be it communal or nationwide, ethnic or separatist, has its own dynamics and social, political and economic circumstances.

The mechanisms through which natural resources induce conflicts are often deeply rooted in economic and social structures and call for integrated approaches in addressing peace and development. Natural resources cut across various other sectors and require multidisciplinary responses that address inequality, including gender inequality, governance, financing, economic policies and international trade. An effective framework for natural resources, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development needs to address those and many other dimensions.

Single-commodity economies especially, mostly in the developing world, can become overdependent on revenues from a particular natural resource. In a world of fluctuating prices and currency exchange rates, combined with potential security threats, such dependency can lead to political, social and economic instability. Certain environments tend to be still more conflict-prone, especially in places where the economy performs poorly and where checks and balances are weak. That leads to less accountable Governments, which may facilitate the spread of corruption and increasing poverty rates. Those features have been shown to be contributing factors to conflicts.

In post-conflict or peacebuilding contexts, the complex nature of challenges may require innovative approaches to deal with the exploitation of natural resources. Success in developing and diversifying export sectors can do much to achieve the growth that provides better livelihoods and generates rising revenues for State-building. But another important and often neglected dimension is how conflict countries integrate themselves into the global economy, doing so

in ways that strengthen the hands of peacemakers, nation-building efforts and poor communities.

It is important to understand in conflict and post-conflict situations how the United Nations system can support timely action that can effectively break the nexus between natural resources and nascent ongoing conflicts — namely, by making natural resources a factor of stability and a source of development, by promoting diversification of the economy and by helping to build a strong and accountable Government. Such improved management of natural resources would need to be made into a central element of State-building efforts within a peacebuilding or national development strategy.

In line with Article 65 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council could consider, on an ad hoc basis, the establishment of a format to discuss development-oriented approaches to the use of natural resources. Such a forum could be useful for advancing our understanding of the link between natural resources and security.

The oversight role of the Economic and Social Council in matters of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance can also be of particular value in those situations by promoting better integration between the relevant policy and operational dimensions and by promoting the concept of an integrated approach, including with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Finally, particular concerns about the growing number of conflicts in oil-producing regions may warrant specific focus on the energy sector, with attention to greater transparency and accountability.

The key operational challenge for us is to transform what we often refer to by the shorthand term "war economies", which are fuelled and sustained by natural resources, into "peace economies", in which resources can provide a source of conflict prevention and human security.

The President: I thank Mr. Čekuolis for his statement.

(*spoke in French*)

In accordance with the understanding reached among members of the Council, I should like to remind all speakers to kindly limit the length of their statements to no more than four minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work as expeditiously as possible. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to deliver a condensed version in the Chamber, on the understanding that they may distribute the longer version in writing.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Council.

I shall first give the floor to the representative of Indonesia. On behalf of the Security Council, I warmly welcome the presence among us of Mr. Eddy Pratomo, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Pratomo (Indonesia): At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation to the delegation of Belgium for organizing this timely meeting on the issue of natural resources and conflict. My delegation is certain that, under the able stewardship of Minister Karel Gucht, the Council will arrive at a successful outcome.

Natural resources serve to support the world economy. They provide the foundations for economic development and can lead to great wealth. Stability and security arise simultaneously. Natural resources enable countries to build a solid foundation for future generations to reap the benefits of today's wise decisions. Natural resources are a gift and a source of blessings for any given country. They also play an important role in fuelling the global economy. In today's world, a nation may be in possession of vast quantities of a certain natural resource. However, it requires human ingenuity to turn such a resource into a valuable commodity. Human ingenuity can produce marvels, but it has also caused many calamities in the past and will undoubtedly do so in the future. The fact that this issue is being discussed in this body is acknowledgment of the potential of natural resources for both progress and problems.

As has been explained by others, the failure to implement principles and policies of good governance can be a factor in fuelling armed conflicts. Proper management of natural resources is certainly one way to address this issue, as is investment in the design and application of sustainable economic development policy. Domestic and foreign companies in the extraction industry can be encouraged to implement the principles of corporate social responsibility.

My delegation fully subscribes to the view that countries facing difficulty in the management of their natural resources should invest more effort in strengthening the rule of law. For our part, Indonesia is continuously trying to improve its legal system and law enforcement institutions. We can list a number of policies and strategies to increase our capacity to withstand internal shocks. However, that alone would be insufficient. To secure stability, a country equally has to have the capacity to withstand external shocks. External shocks are beyond the capacity of many United Nations Member States to address individually.

In our view, it is imperative that external factors be taken into account when we discuss the link between armed conflicts and natural resources. The extraction of natural resources can be realized only if it meets several criteria, which include the possession of high technology and extensive capital and the existence of a reliable and functioning market. The latter is sometimes overlooked.

For my delegation, one of the key issues in discussing this topic is the role of the international market and its participants. A particular type of natural resource would neither attract attention nor incite fierce competition if it did not have considerable value or carry with it the expectation that it could become valuable. It can be in terms of strategic value or financial value.

In a world marked by interdependence and interconnectivity at the regional and global levels, one action in one part of the globe would have a direct impact on another part of the world. The extraction of a particular natural resource would have an impact elsewhere. A surge of demand in one part of the world would increase pressure to find it at any cost.

As well as acknowledging the responsibility of the source country, we believe that destination or transit countries also have a major role to play. They could be a source of armed conflict. All of us have a shared responsibility to prevent and act against acts that fuel armed conflicts. To emphasize heavily the responsibility of the source country without highlighting the responsibility of transit and destination countries would prevent us from having a profound discussion. It is this trinity that we must bear in mind.

Let me underline that natural resources would fail to bring benefit to anyone, if such commodities could not reach the market. Sellers, buyers and users thus have equal responsibility in preventing natural resources from being used to fuel armed conflicts.

Past practices of violent and blatant competition to possess natural resources may have ceased to exist. Many went to extremes in order to satisfy their insatiable appetites for valuable natural resources, thus leaving countries and nations destitute. No one can guarantee that these practices will not be repeated in another place or time. History does not exactly repeat itself, but it does rhyme. What differentiates one era from another is that there are different players and different contacts.

Nevertheless, the aim is still similar and shaped by different market factors. Gold and black gold are some of the most valuable commodities of our lifetime. In years to come, other energy-sensitive commodities will have taken their place and will drive competition, leading to armed conflicts.

From our perspective, it is clear that fierce competition for possession of valuable natural resources fuels armed conflict. It is not and cannot be the natural resource as such that is responsible. Thus, in order to address this issue effectively, the Council must acknowledge that its vast power has limitations. It can impose sanctions and more. It can authorize military actions, but this would not solve the underlying problems. The Council might be tempted to become involved in the area of prevention.

The Charter has purposely designed several institutions to tackle successive phases of conflict. I can cite several organizations within the United Nations family that are well armed in the area of conflict prevention. The United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime have been tirelessly working to promote good governance in many developing countries. They can contribute enormously to the maintenance of peace and security. They can also work in raising the awareness of relevant stakeholders in the developed countries about the impact of their actions and policies in fuelling violent conflict. Moreover, the Peacebuilding Commission can also address issues related to post-conflict situations. Hence, the United Nations is not lacking in the area of proper tools to address the many faces and stages of armed conflict.

In conclusion, my delegation would suggest that the Security Council and the General Assembly discuss

ways and means of jointly organizing an international conference on this important issue. Such a conference organized by these two vital bodies would send a clear and unambiguous signal of the commitment of the two bodies to address this issue in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I am pleased to see you among us here today presiding over the Council, and I would like to congratulate you on behalf of the delegation of Qatar for the outstanding performance of your delegation, which is presiding over the Council this month. I wish you every success in carrying out that task in the best possible way.

Today's meeting comes at a time when a number of countries endowed with natural resources are in the grip of conflicts and are host to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Sadly, this phenomenon is not new. It is merely a contemporary version of an old story that dates back to the second half of the last century. Back then, the main incentive for embarking on adventures beyond national borders was the race to control and exploit the natural resources of developing countries.

At the outset, I would like to state the following facts. First, the topic of natural resources does not fall within the Security Council's competence and mandate, as set forth and defined by the United Nations Charter. Rather, this topic lies at the heart of the competence and mandates of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Dealing with this topic in the Security Council infringes on the prerogatives of both bodies and undermines the democratic principles of the United Nations. We do not approve of extending the authority of the Security Council to cover State resources by linking natural resources to issues of international peace and security.

Secondly, the principles of national political and economic independence depend on a State being able to exercise its full and undiminished right to self-determination and full sovereignty over its natural resources in the interest of the development and well-being of its people. International law has ensured the absolute right of every State to dispose of its natural wealth and resources, in accordance with its national interests. Accordingly, endowing the Security Council with authority over those resources contravenes international law and diminishes the sovereignty of States over their natural resources by subjecting it to a global strategy.

Thirdly, on 14 December 1962, the General Assembly adopted resolution 1803 (XVII). This resolution was entitled "Permanent sovereignty over natural resources". It indicated, among other things, that "The right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the State concerned".

Fourthly, and in the same vein, General Assembly resolution 3281 (XXIX) of 12 December 1974, entitled "Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States", primarily defines in its chapter I the principles governing economic, as well as political, relations among States. Article 2(1) of chapter II entitled "Economic Rights and Duties of States" also says that "Every State has and shall freely exercise full permanent sovereignty, including possession, use and disposal, over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activities".

It is worth drawing attention to the following: article 1, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the United Nations Charter; and the international rules governing the issue of natural resources in situations of military occupation, which require the occupying Power not to exploit natural resources in occupied territories and not to cause any damage thereto.

Bearing all this in mind, we would like to stress that the root causes of most conflict situations today are due, not to natural resources, but rather to various international and domestic political reasons.

When reviewing the reports of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict in Africa, we find that he attributes the causes of conflict to the different stages of economic development and different policies and patterns of internal and international interaction and regional variables. The reports also touch on the cumulative outcomes of the colonial era. While those reports also refer to natural resources, they do not focus on them as a root cause of conflict.

In the light of that historical background, it would have been more useful for us to address the

relationship between natural resources and development. A case in point is Africa, which is a major producer of basic commodities. Commodity-based economies are currently booming in Africa, due to increasing demand from countries that have fast-growing regions, including India and China. In that respect, developed countries can play an extremely constructive role by integrating developing countries into world trade, facilitating access for their exports to the world markets and providing preferential treatment for them, facilitating the transfer of technology, and increasing official development assistance and debt relief. They can also support the South-South cooperation strategy as part of the Tripartite Technical Cooperation for development. In this way, they would assist many resource-endowed countries, especially in Africa, by boosting the growth engines in those countries, so that they can progress quickly towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

A country's natural resources should not be a source of affliction for it. It is crucial that we avoid repeating the history of the painful colonial era. Rather than approach the issue of natural resources as a source of conflict, we must include it in the development agenda of the United Nations.

Thus, it would be more useful for States to discuss the issue of natural resources in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in the context of the development agenda, rather than here in the Security Council. Such an approach would enable the developing countries to manage their natural resources without foreign trusteeships or interference, in a way that serves their national interests, and within the framework of a just international economic order.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): The decision by the Belgian Government to introduce the item of today's discussion to the international community is an acknowledgment of the important correlation that we frequently find between natural resources and armed conflicts.

Abundance, while it is an important element for peace and security, can also be a heavy burden if its fruits are not invested in the future, or if States do not ensure that its benefits belong to the people in general, through the transparent regulation of political counterweights and State institutions. The Council has dealt with violent disputes where the exploitation of resources has fuelled brutality and disregard for the most basic human rights. But limiting oneself to reaction alone does not fulfil the preventive responsibility of the Council vis-à-vis threats to international peace and security. At an initial stage, it is up to Governments to ensure participatory and inclusive management of their natural wealth, for the purpose of ensuring that ambition does not lead to conflict. The Council must then cooperate with Governments and promote their efforts to achieve greater levels of transparency and responsibility and to prevent situations in which families are uprooted from their homes, millions of deaths occur and cruelty runs rampant.

Through cooperation among non-governmental organizations, the international community and private enterprise, valuable initiatives have begun to reduce the illegal trafficking of natural resources and to normalize the actions of Governments and private enterprise in the exploitation of mineral and natural resources. For example, the Kimberley Process can take pride in the fact that today 99 per cent of the diamonds in circulation are conflict-free. That success and others like it should encourage us to meet new challenges.

Unfortunately, instruments such as the Kimberley Process are voluntary commitments, and there is a real danger that their implementation will not be made a priority. But that should not prevent the international community from using mechanisms such as the Peacebuilding Commission to be more active in promoting greater monitoring and transparency and to monitor the actions of public and private actors. The lessons drawn from recent initiatives to minimize the transfer of resources in conflicts involve identifying ways and means to reinforce those initiatives in a context appropriate for the Council.

One controversial point involves the disregard of sanctions imposed by the Council. Although progress has been made in drafting so-called targeted sanctions, we need to consider what actions might be devised for those who violate those provisions. We could then, as our countries declared in 1945 when signing the United Nations Charter, promote "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): During every era and nearly everywhere, natural resources have been connected with war and violence. They have

inspired pirates and conquistadors in the search for gold.

Today's debate on the maintenance of international peace and security: natural resources and conflict, also offers us the opportunity to address the aspects of prevention as well as the management of conflicts. Congo thanks the Belgian delegation in particular, for that initiative. In addition, we wish to welcome your personal presence, Mr. Minister for Foreign Affairs, as the head of your country's delegation.

Congo is convinced that, in the quest for more effective prevention and enhanced consistency which has led the various bodies of the United Nations to evaluate their degree of effectiveness, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council — we also welcome the presence of their Presidents here — will focus jointly on the fundamental factors underlying peace, security and development, which are part of their mandate.

The abundance of natural resources in Africa has helped to shape its contemporary history, more often than not to its detriment rather than to its advantage. Since the era of triangular trade between Europe, Africa and the Americas, the trade in what was then called "ebony wood" provided the incentive for colonial intrusion with agricultural and mining concessions made to the major mining companies, which were accountable only to their States and their boards of directors. Struggles for influence among transnational corporations and recurrent wars, which continue today to affect the pace of change in that part of the world, reflect striking continuity in both time and space.

In the 1960s, Africa quickly took the measure of this major issue affecting its accession to international sovereignty. Thus, a quarter century before the Rio Earth Summit, the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources set out conditions for the control and management of our natural resources. At the same time, the Group of 77, and the third world in general, were advocating the establishment of a new international economic order based on fair commodity prices and an equitable trading system; they also worked to form associations of countries that produced various commodities.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to state that its views are in line with those to be outlined by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the African Group.

The 1998 report of Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318) clearly showed that natural resources were playing an increasingly important role in triggering and sustaining conflict and that those resources aroused greed among local and external actors alike. States or companies were organized into networks that control the entire process from exploitation to marketing and simultaneously ensure prosperity for the arms merchants who were well able to benefit from that process.

Thus, oil, diamonds, timber, gold, coltan and other commodities constituted the main stakes in the wars in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere. Increasingly, to those resources we must add those that derive from the control of land and water resources in heavily populated areas, such as in Rwanda and Burundi, as well as in the Middle East. Given those stakes, regional cooperation initiatives are beginning to be established, such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and the Stability, Security and Development Pact for the Great Lakes region.

When natural resources are not the primary cause of conflict their exploitation determines its duration. In Angola, for example, it was diamond mining that provided the União Nacional Para a Independencia Total de Angola with sufficient revenue to buy arms, pay its soldiers and engage in combat for many years, which destroyed the country and hampered its development. And when, as in that case, external allies are aligned behind each of the parties to the conflict, external collusion is active and operates virtually in broad daylight.

In many cases, rebels have taken over mining activities and are thus self-financing. They sometimes use a third financing mechanism: the sale of rights to the future exploitation of resources they intend to seize or which they already control. We have seen this in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

More than previously, internal factors in African conflicts are linked largely to control of the political power that makes possible the control of economic resources; the two are closely connected. As Kofi Annan stated in his 1998 report, given the multi-ethnic

character of most African States, such competition can lead only to an often violent politicization of ethnicity. The external actors I spoke of earlier thus find it easy to intervene — if not in triggering a conflict, then at least in keeping it alive.

There is a new saying in Africa: oil is the source of conflict and war. That assertion reflects the bitter observation that, in some countries, natural resources hinder the smooth functioning of the economy: corruption and the squandering of revenues from exploitation, even when exploitation is carried out with seeming respect for State sovereignty. It has indeed been noted that the countries most dependent on the export of minerals or certain other products have also been those with the weakest economic growth and with the direst poverty. Such elements cannot fail to be of concern, because they increase the probability of conflict.

Thus, indicators of poor governance increase with the weakening of the rule of law and the subordination of administrative structures to the management of commodity exports, rather than to the goal of strengthening procedures for regulation and control. Natural resources have even been able to advance secession movements under the influence of certain citizens obsessed with the concentration of such resources in a part of the country with a particular cultural, ethnic or geographical identity.

Indeed, the nature of political power in many countries with natural resources has given rise to patrimonial management giving the leaders exclusive control over resources, to the detriment of development goals. The absence of oversight of State bodies leads to all manner of abuse, including the diversion of capital — always towards countries of the northern hemisphere. According to World Bank and International Monetary Fund assessments, the African continent — the very symbol of development assistance — is in the paradoxical situation of being a net source of capital for developed countries at a time when the latter countries are experiencing donor fatigue.

Moreover, foreign businesses operating in countries in conflict or crisis situations often exacerbate tension, not only because they have sometimes been involved in the overthrow of a given regime, thus creating instability that favours their interests, but frequently also because of the meagre interest they have shown in the negative consequences of their activities with respect to human rights and the environment.

Developing countries that produce or possess natural resources must strengthen their democratic systems, in particular political pluralism and oversight mechanisms, and must promote the rule of law and zero tolerance of corruption — in a word, good governance. As regards external collusion, codes of conduct should be established to bolster the social responsibility of all in host countries to direct activities towards the common good and the establishment of policies of transparency in economic and financial operations. And to ensure the credibility of sanctions regimes, transnational corporations should not be treated more leniently than local leaders when it comes to economic abuses and crimes.

We welcome the Security Council's support of the Kimberley Certification Process, which has helped reduce the trade in what are commonly called blood diamonds or conflict diamonds. That is a major contribution that is restoring a certain degree of ethics to this trade.

It is also important that States be encouraged to abide by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). That initiative thwarts corruption in that it lifts the veil off mining companies' payments to host States — payments whose opacity fuels corruption and patrimonial management. Citizens must be better informed about income derived from the exploitation of their countries' natural resources in order to reduce certain predatory behaviours that run counter to the public interest and could lead to instability and even armed conflict.

As for oil companies in particular, they would benefit from publishing what they pay to the States in which they carry out their activities. That is the idea of the "Publish what you pay" campaign, which is supported by many organizations throughout the world.

Finally, in the area of utilizing natural resources for peacebuilding, insufficient financing has often been mentioned. While peacebuilding requires considerable resources, those resources could be provided by the country concerned. That is the paradox of immensely rich countries that are floundering in poverty — a paradox that in itself challenges the international system of economic relations and, at the same time, poses the problem of peacekeeping operations and the

strategic prospects on which they depend. But that is a different debate.

My delegation supports the draft presidential statement to be prepared in the light of our deliberations and reaffirms its interest in this debate. We undertake to give it our particular attention and that of the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, over which the Congo has the honour to preside.

Mr. Tachie-Menson (Ghana): My delegation welcomes you, Mr. Minister, to this meeting and would like to express its appreciation to the Belgian presidency for organizing this debate. My delegation also associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the African Group.

Over the ages, natural resources and their exploitation have been a factor contributing to tensions and conflicts within States and between States. In recent years, while inter-State wrangling over natural resources has been managed relatively well through mechanisms put in place by the international community, such as mediation and international judicial bodies, intra-State rivalry and claims for such resources have been causes of brutal conflicts and civil wars in some regions of the globe.

In the discharge of its responsibility to maintain international peace and security, it is only appropriate that the Security Council should focus on natural resources as one of the root causes of conflict.

In theory, natural resources provide an opportunity for enhanced economic growth and development. However, in various instances, those same resources have provided a motive for conflict and, in several cases, have fuelled and prolonged conflicts.

In discussing this issue, it may be helpful to consider it from the following perspectives: conflict prevention, conflict situations and post-conflict situations.

With regard to conflict prevention, it is imperative that natural resources be managed responsibly for the benefit of the population. Such a good-governance approach should be aimed at promoting human security and economic development. The nexus between human security and development should be the basis of such a policy.

It is the responsibility of Government to ensure the protection and survival of the constitutional order by creating the conditions necessary for human security, which will reinforce efforts towards development. In sum, the critical factor is equitable distribution of the returns from natural resources to provide, inter alia, health care, education, poverty alleviation programmes and systems to entrench the rule of law. This inclusive approach removes the sources of tension and disaffection from society.

In conflict situations, short of intervention, the challenge for the international community is to devise means to prevent the misuse of profits derived from natural resources from fuelling and prolonging the war. The United Nations and the international community as a whole have resorted to commodity sanctions and certification as means of confronting the problem. The question is: how effective are the sanctions and the certification process?

It must be stated that the Kimberley Process of certification for diamonds has achieved quite significant success in stemming the trade in diamonds from conflict areas. However, there is there is evidence that in some cases greedy businessmen have found ingenious means to trade in such diamonds through unwitting third-party countries, thus obscuring the origin of the diamonds. Sanctions-busting also has become a fine art, with the prohibited items finding their way into the world market. Clearly, there is a need to strengthen the sanctions regime and the certification process. That cannot be done without vigilance and active cooperation on the part of all Members.

Another aspect of the illegal exploitation of natural resources in conflict situations is its impact on the environment. In the absence of a responsible governance system, it is unlikely that safety and environmental standards will be complied with.

With regard to post-conflict situations, the Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in facilitating the rebuilding of institutions of governance to ensure competent and responsible management of natural resources. Once a freely elected and accountable Government is in place, the sanctions may be lifted.

In discussing the link between natural resources and conflict, we cannot overlook the most precious of all natural resources: water. Water is life itself. Even

though water is a renewable resource, supplies have been affected by pollution, overpopulation and climate change. Those factors have combined to increase pressure on water resources in terms of both quantity and quality. The result is a looming global water crisis, with which the international community will have to contend in the future.

A 1999 World Bank report indicated that 40 per cent of the world's population — approximately 2 billion people — has no access to safe drinking water. Various studies indicate that water is likely to replace energy as the most critical natural resource and is also likely to be a source of tensions and conflicts within and between nations. To avert this looming crisis, the international community must institute a comprehensive coordinated programme of action on the management of water resources, population policy and climate change.

Finally, my delegation wishes to stress that the issue of natural resources and conflict must be examined in all its multifaceted aspects if we are to make any progress.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): The discussion of natural resources and conflict is indeed both timely and necessary. By proposing such a specific topic, the Belgian presidency has made it possible to draw a clear distinction between African countries that are at peace, where natural resources have become the lifeline of the people, as opposed to those countries that are caught up in conflict or emerging from conflict.

Africa is a continent richly endowed with some of the most sought-after natural resources, such as oil, diamonds, cocoa, coltan and timber. While many African countries use their resources to promote a better life for their people, it is in countries where there is conflict that the presence of those natural resources has become a curse.

During the 2006 United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa, the meeting identified the "need for a broad and holistic approach that takes cognizance of the interconnectedness between natural resource governance and other peace, security and development issues" as well as the "need for coordination, cooperation and partnership in addressing natural resources".

In many countries that have seen conflict, it is the rebel movements that have developed access to external markets of the developed world, as demonstrated in the evidence gathered on the many conflicts that have become the subject of the Security Council, such as Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire. This situation makes the role of traders, transport companies, international banks and transnational corporations a critical part of this debate. On the other hand, the home Governments of those involved in trading with rebels, smugglers and arms traders must also be held accountable for the actions of their entities abroad.

In the case of diamonds, the Kimberley Process has demonstrated how effective industry-wide initiatives could be in creating accountability and ensuring that the illicit export of resources is curtailed. Accountability, transparency and ethical behaviour on the part of the private sector in the trade of natural resources should therefore be encouraged. This approach would be a proactive way to ensure that natural resources contribute to peace, prosperity and economic development.

In responding to conflicts, the Security Council has since 2000 implemented numerous sanctions regimes. The success of those regimes can be assured only if States and transnational corporations exercise their obligations to fully adhere to and implement the sanctions regimes imposed by the Security Council. The role of the United Nations expert groups in monitoring the implementation of the sanctions regimes and in ensuring compliance with and enforcement of those regimes is indispensable. It is therefore critical that the capacity and role of the Secretariat and the expert groups be continuously improved and enhanced in order to have a proper appreciation of and response to changing developments on the ground.

The role of targeted and individual sanctions has also become an important tool in the hands of the Security Council in addressing the illicit trade in natural resources and its negative consequences. However, the reversibility of targeted sanctions can act as an important carrot in ensuring that once behavioural modification has been ensured, those measures are reversed. A case in point is the recent lifting of the Liberia timber and diamond sanctions regimes.

In the case of peacemaking and peacebuilding, the Council should ensure that the root causes of conflicts and the role of resources as a contributing factor are addressed in the peace agreements as a way of ensuring that countries do not relapse into the vicious cycle of conflict. In this regard, the role of the Peacebuilding Commission is critical in ensuring that natural resources are taken into consideration when developing its integrated peacebuilding strategies for countries emerging from conflict.

The nexus between natural resources and conflicts manifests itself in different ways in different countries. A holistic approach is critical in designing a multifaceted policy response to these complex issues in the areas of governance and the role of the private sector, and in addressing inequality and underdevelopment. This debate today, in our view, will certainly assist in developing such partnerships and broad holistic approaches. It is for this reason that we support the statement that will be adopted today.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): France associates itself with the statement that the Permanent Representative of Germany will make on behalf of the European Union.

France would like to thank, first of all, the Belgian presidency of the Security Council and Minister Karel de Gucht for organizing this useful debate on an important topic. We very much hope that the discussion today will advance understanding of the link between natural resources and conflicts and lead to greater consideration of this link in the Council's actions.

This is not a new problem. Since the 1990s, the financing of certain armed rebellions in Eastern and Central Africa by what were called "blood diamonds" drew attention to the links between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the effects on peace and security. In fact, a veritable war economy cycle was established in some countries. In order to stop it, it was essential to find a response that integrates this dimension, an economic dimension.

The Kimberley Process, born directly of this observation, is considered to be the main success with regard to certification of a mineral resource. The success of the Process is reflected in particular in the significant increase in the official output of the countries concerned. The Process — which the European Union chairs this year — remains fragile, however, as it is dependent on improvements in keeping statistics and in the implementation of more rigorous internal controls. Despite this fragility, it is a success that has been the source of numerous debates now taking place on extending and adapting the methodology to other mineral resources.

These initiatives must be encouraged by the Security Council, as they respond directly to the problem of the illegal exploitation of natural resources as a factor in conflict — which is within the Council's competence. The Council must also emphasize with force and clarity and without hesitation, each time that the situation requires it, the link between illegal exploitation of a certain natural resource and a conflict.

We believe that we must also see about strengthening the effectiveness of sanctions mechanisms established by the Council with a view to greater coherence and responsiveness. We believe that that is one of the Council's top priorities in its action in this area.

The Council must also consider the actions to be taken from the period of managing and exiting a crisis so that those actions are naturally extended in the post-conflict framework. Concretely, that means that the Council must also take the problem that brings us together today into account when drafting the mandates for peacekeeping operations.

It must also be recognized, as several speakers before me have done, that the links between natural resources and conflicts concern areas that come under the competence of other bodies. I am naturally thinking of all the actors in development, since the sound management of natural resources is a factor in stability and sustainable development.

What is our Council's place in this? It seems to us, in fact, that the exact extent of the responsibility that the Council must take in this matter in relation to other international institutions or bilateral partners cannot be determined in advance. It depends, in reality, on the circumstances of each specific case, and there is certainly no model in this matter.

We believe that the Peacebuilding Commission, given its mandate, will naturally have to take into consideration the problem of the exploitation of natural resources in the context of its work, with the desire that resources of countries emerging from conflict be

exploited in such conditions that only lead to the stabilization and development of the country.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize the importance of this debate to our joint consideration of ways to fine-tune the instruments available to the Council.

Mr. Chávez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to welcome the presence here of the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

As we have stated on a number of occasions, the causes of conflict can best be explained by looking at the structural patterns of societies that have suffered from civil war. These structural characteristics reveal the complexity of the internal conflicts under consideration by the Council, particularly those in Africa, as well that of as the tasks of post-conflict recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation.

There is no doubt about some of the structural characteristics common to all these conflicts. Societies with a very low per-capita income; societies that are dependent on the production of natural resources and, more generally, of commodities; societies with a low level of economic growth; and countries whose economic structures still reflect the influence of colonialism and that are poorly integrated into global markets tend to be more prone to violent civil conflicts. That tendency towards violence is even greater when factors of ethnic or cultural exclusion, among others, are involved.

To prevent the resurgence of conflict in such societies, it is necessary to create viable economic structures that will promote the diversification of production, integrate technology into the end product and give it greater value added. We also must work to counter their extreme vulnerability to a drop in commodity prices.

However, better commodity prices are not sufficient, just as it is not sufficient to sign an agreement or to hold elections. Above all, it is necessary to create viable economic structures and inclusive democratic institutions, as well as to ensure the smooth functioning of a society based on the rule of law, with systems in place to protect human rights and endowed with a transparent and sound judicial system.

Broad-based efforts are under way to analyse and pinpoint the link between natural resources and conflict situations. We should recall that there are a number of ways of viewing the link between conflicts and natural resources — a link that Peru does not see as being intrinsic or unavoidable. Given such a broad conceptual perspective, the Council should focus its reflection on common elements, that is to say, based on its own experience with the countries on its agenda and bearing in mind the character of each particular conflict.

From that standpoint, an initial observation might be that the tools used by the Council have not served as a substitute for the political will of the parties to a conflict to restore peace or to rebuild a country's institutions and its political, economic and social governance. On the contrary, the will to rebuild has been strengthened when viable agreements have been reached on the use and distribution of the wealth emanating from natural resources and other commodities. There is no doubt that one of the prerequisites for the success of the Council's work is ownership by the parties in conflict of such resources — that is to say, such processes must be based on the recognition of the sovereignty of States over their own natural resources.

We can conclude, therefore, that we must place greater emphasis on enhancing the effectiveness of the instruments used by the Council to strengthen the internal regimes for the sovereign management of natural resources agreed on in peace accords, and to ensure that financing for the parties in conflict does not prolong or intensify a violent struggle for power. That approach has been used by the Security Council with positive results in the quest for peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Internal agreement on the sovereign management of natural resources also appears necessary with respect to the future stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, we believe that it can be key also in other situations on the Council's agenda, such as in the Sudan, Iraq and Timor-Leste.

As we stated earlier, we cannot generalize or assert that, wherever natural resources exist, there must necessarily be conflict. Nor can we state that the mere existence of natural resources will ensure peace, stability and development. It is up to the Security Council, therefore, on the basis of the security situation prevailing in the countries on its agenda, to follow

closely the political developments in each of those countries, strengthen political agreements to help States regain control over their territory, and ensure compliance with arms embargoes and sanctions regimes.

Similarly, in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, regional organizations, neighbouring States as well as other relevant actors, in particular in the area of financing and development — such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — the Council must ensure that the capacities of States are strengthened so as to promote the sovereign and transparent management of their natural resources and the process of peacebuilding.

Finally, we believe that our experience should enable the Council to take an approach that is based on agreements reached by the parties to a conflict concerning the sovereign and sustainable use of natural resources, thus assigning mandates that are appropriate to United Nations integrated offices and peacekeeping operations. Sanctions regimes must be made more effective, and expert groups must be encouraged to consider the lessons learned, make use of them and, when necessary, propose that modifications be made to the mandates of peacekeeping operations or to sanctions regimes.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Natural resources are a rich endowment from Mother Nature and have played a critical role in the perpetuation, development and prosperity of human civilization.

However, the exploitation of natural resources is a double-edged sword. The improper use of resources can trigger a series of problems in the economic, social, environmental and governance areas. Under specific circumstances, the irrational exploitation, use and distribution of natural resources can cause a gradual increase in social conflicts, which can culminate in internal strife or even in regional disputes.

Of course, the causes of armed conflicts are complex and deep-rooted and involve many interrelated factors. The connection between natural resources and armed conflicts is not a simple causal one, nor does possession of the former necessarily lead directly to the latter. In our view, to properly address the link between natural resources and conflict, the following principles should be taken into account.

First, it is necessary truly to respect the full and permanent sovereignty of countries over their natural resources. Since the 1960s, the General Assembly has adopted a series of resolutions and documents recognizing that a country enjoys full and permanent sovereignty over its own natural resources and is entitled to exercise that right freely. Those resolutions and documents have played an important role in encouraging countries to develop their economies through their own efforts, promoting effective international cooperation and maintaining world peace and stability. They should continue to be effectively implemented.

Secondly, it is necessary to continue to strengthen coordination among the various United Nations agencies. Many development agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have done a great deal of work in assisting countries to realize the rational exploitation and sustainable use of their natural resources. The Peacebuilding Commission has also offered guidance to post-conflict countries concerning the effective use of natural resources in the reconstruction process. Various agencies within the United Nations system should further strengthen coordination and cooperation, consolidate current resources and further enhance efficiency.

Thirdly, the Security Council should continue to play a constructive role. Embargoes on natural resources produced in conflict areas are an important tool at the disposal of the Security Council to prevent, intervene in and put an end to conflicts. All countries must therefore strictly implement the existing sanctions imposed by the Council.

At the same time, the Security Council should also give more consideration to the possible humanitarian impacts of sanctions and take corresponding remedial measures to avoid focusing on one aspect of the question while neglecting others. Since the purpose of sanctions is not to punish, we must attach importance to and improve the mechanism for lifting sanctions. When the time is right, the Security Council should lift sanctions immediately so as to give full play to the policy-guiding role of sanctions and put natural resources into service for the peaceful reconstruction of the country concerned and the welfare of the local people as soon as possible.

Fourthly, it is necessary to let regional organizations and other relevant mechanisms and initiatives play their full role. In recent years, regional organizations, including the African Union and the European Union, have played an important role in encouraging countries to strengthen the management, protection and rational use of natural resources. The adoption of the Security, Stability and Development Pact for the Great Lakes region has demonstrated the determination of countries in Central Africa to strengthen unity, join hands in development and engage in cooperation. In addition, intergovernmental mechanisms and arrangements such as the Kimberley Process have been a strong force in curbing illicit transactions in natural resources and maintaining the stability of natural resource-producing countries, especially in Africa. The efforts of the aforementioned mechanisms and individual countries complement those of the United Nations and should continue to be encouraged.

Natural resources are a critical material basis for the survival and development of human society. It is the shared responsibility of all countries to make wise use of natural resources and to strive for sustainable development to the benefit of all mankind. As an important arena for advocating international cooperation and maintaining world peace, the United Nations undoubtedly has a tremendous role to play in that area. We support the continued discussion of this issue in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): I would like to start by thanking you, Sir, and your entire delegation for your efforts to bring this important issue before the Council during your presidency.

In terms of our discussion, I would like to make five points.

First, this is an important issue — one that we have been interested in for some time. Ten years ago, the Security Council convened a ministerial-level meeting to discuss the causes of conflict in Africa. In response to the Council's request, then-Secretary-General Annan issued a report on the sources of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa that identified the struggle for control over natural resources — diamonds, timber and other raw materials — as factors contributing to conflicts in Liberia, Angola and Sierra Leone. Since then, the international community has taken important steps to address the use of natural resources to finance conflict, particularly in Africa, and to help ensure that revenues from natural resources are put to good use. However, we still have a long way to go.

Secondly, the United States has taken this issue seriously in multilateral and bilateral venues alike. The United States has strongly supported efforts by the Security Council to prevent the use of natural resources to sustain conflicts in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the implementation of regulatory mechanisms and, as necessary, sanctions. We also believe that the transparent, equitable management of natural resources is a key aspect of post-conflict reconstruction that should be addressed by the Peacebuilding Commission. Those efforts should put a particular focus on the participation of women, since they are often dependent on natural resources and most affected by violent conflicts.

The United States has also been at the forefront of efforts by the international community — Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the World Bank, the United Nations, the Global Environment Facility, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the G-8 — both to prevent the illicit use of resources from fuelling conflicts and to harness those natural resources for sustainable development.

In 2000, the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands; 16 oil, mining and energy companies; together with human rights, labour and corporate responsibility groups developed voluntary principles on security and human rights. Those voluntary principles provide practical guidance to companies to strengthen human rights safeguards in their security arrangements in the extractive sector. In 2003, the United States signed on to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme to control and monitor the world's trade in rough diamonds and to prevent diamonds from being used to finance rebel movements.

At the G-8 summit in 2003, the United States joined other G-8 leaders in committing to a broad-based anti-corruption and transparency action plan that included one component to pilot, on a voluntary basis, an intensified approach to transparency in the extractive industries sector. That G-8 initiative spurred

the negotiation and adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, signed by 140 countries to date.

In our bilateral assistance programmes, the United States has made the sustainable management of natural resources a component of our development strategies in countries where extractive industries are a major or potentially major revenue source. In particular, we have focused on forests, land, minerals and water and their linkages to violent conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding. The transparent, sustainable management of forests achieves many goals. It can keep timber revenues from being used to finance violent conflict; prevent forests from serving as safe havens for armed groups; ensure equitable access to and benefits from forest resources to reduce the risk of conflicts involving indigenous people, local elites and outsiders; and is essential for sustainable development and the maintenance of healthy ecosystems.

Thirdly, if we adopt innovative approaches, we can make progress. For example, the Liberia Forest Initiative — which the United States launched in 2003 together with the Government of Liberia, other donors and non-governmental organizations — is increasingly viewed as a model for forest reform efforts in Africa and elsewhere.

The United States co-sponsored the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance ministerial meetings in East Asia in 2001, Africa in 2003, and Europe and North Asian in 2005, which have gone a long way towards raising political awareness and commitment to action to address illegal activities in the forest sector worldwide.

The United States is also working across Asia to reduce pervasive forest-related conflicts. In the Philippines, Nepal, Indonesia and Cambodia, we are assisting efforts to clarify forest use rights and land tenure, particularly for poor and indigenous populations. Our work to support the Sava River Commission has brought formerly hostile parties together in several former Yugoslav republics to collaborate in managing a key transboundary resource represented by the water of the Sava River.

Fourthly, the issue of addressing and properly managing natural resources is necessarily related to good governance and transparency. Those are the essential factors needed to delink natural resources from violent conflict. Good governance includes working within the country's financial and judicial institutions, which are responsible for collecting Government revenues from the extractive industries and enforcing contracts and regulatory actions. Good governance also includes civil society participation in deciding how resources are managed and in clarifying resource rights, which is particularly important in post-conflict settings and peace agreements to prevent further eruptions of violence over control of resources.

Finally, together we have made progress, but, as I said before, we still have a long way to go to prevent the struggle over natural resources from fuelling conflict.

It was 10 years ago that the United States had the opportunity to raise this issue during our presidency of the Council. Yet, revenues from natural resources continue to fund violent conflicts throughout the world. For that reason, we welcome the efforts of Foreign Minister De Gucht — whom we welcome and thank for his leadership and for presiding over this meeting — to host this meeting and this opportunity to focus on ways that national Governments and the international community can harness natural resources for productive purposes. We look forward to continuing to contribute to this effort. We expect that this dialogue and the surge of interest in this important issue will continue.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): It is indeed an honour for all of us to have Minister De Gucht among us here. I would like to thank the President for taking the initiative to convene this debate, as well as for the very lucid, focused and forward-looking concept paper that he has provided. This debate provides a very good opportunity to take up the theme of natural resources and conflict from the perspective of the Security Council while at the same time stressing the importance of the role and experience in this field of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. I would therefore like to extend a warm welcome to Sheikha Al Khalifa and Ambassador Dalius Čekuolis, and thank them for their statements. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his substantial introductory remarks.

Italy fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union. Allow me to make just a few additional remarks.

There is no doubt that the mismanagement of natural resources can become a cause of conflict or contribute to fuelling and sustaining an ongoing conflict, especially when it comes to the illegal trade or trafficking of high-market-value resources. Moreover, in the post-conflict phase, lack of good governance in the management of natural resources could create instability, increasing the risk of relapsing into conflict.

In that regard, Italy supports stronger engagement by the United Nations system in preventing the exploitation of natural resources by the parties to a conflict and making the utmost effort to that end, keeping in mind that the issue must also be addressed from the point of view of development and as part of the development agenda. We can benefit a great deal from the lessons learned in cases such as Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the Security Council responded to the crises by imposing commodity sanctions in a successful and effective manner. Italy also believes that whenever commodity sanctions are in place, peacekeeping operations should be given an appropriate mandate to assist the Government concerned to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources from further fuelling the conflict.

As for the post-conflict period, it is fundamental to ensure accountable and transparent management of natural resources in order to generate the financial resources that are needed for reconstruction and development and to let people share in the dividends of peace. In that regard, as other speakers who have taken the floor before me have done, we would like to stress the crucial role that the Peacebuilding Commission could play in this field by assisting the Governments concerned. At the same time, regional initiatives can also play an important role, such as the Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, which was adopted last December by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

With regard to the wider range of initiatives that are not directly linked to the Council's own efforts but that make a contribution to the same goal, I would like to underline the importance of the efforts being made in the area of combating corruption, promoting the transparency of revenues and corporate responsibility of private-sector enterprises through initiatives undertaken within the European Union and the G8 framework, to which Italy continues to contribute actively, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

The efforts of the General Assembly with regard to the very issue we are debating here today are of fundamental importance. In that regard, as all other speakers have done, allow me to refer to the Kimberley Process as the best example to date of international cooperation in this area.

Finally, I would like to conclude by referring to the significance of the myriad United Nations frameworks overseen by the Economic and Social Council intended to improve the management and sustainable use of natural resources at the global level. I am thinking not only of major multilateral environmental agreements on climate, desertification and biodiversity, but also of a variety of mechanisms and initiatives, ranging from the Global Compact, to UN-Energy, to the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, and so forth. It might be useful for the future to consider those activities in a more coherent framework, bearing in mind their broader impact on long-term conflict prevention.

Lastly, I think that the idea raised by the Mr. Pratomo, Indonesia's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, with regard to a conference certainly deserves to be explored, especially because, as the Minister implied, the conference should have a focused, comprehensive and action-oriented approach that builds upon what has already been achieved.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): Let me express our appreciation to Belgium for putting the theme of natural resources and conflict before the Security Council for consideration. We believe that this issue is relevant and important to the work of the Security Council in dealing with various conflicts and post-conflict situations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later on by the representative of Germany on behalf of the presidency of the European Union. Let me add a few additional comments that my delegation considers it important to underline.

It has been well documented in various Security Council resolutions and through various existing commodity-based sanctions regimes that natural resources often play a role in causing, or even further fuelling, conflicts. Natural resources can also cause a relapse into conflict in situations where the post-conflict management of natural resources is not addressed properly. Illegal exploitation deprives the population of affected States of the wealth that belongs

to them. It is no coincidence that, after years of plundering, post-conflict countries like Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia are among to the most impoverished nations in the world.

It would be too simplistic to see the problem of the illegal exploitation of natural resources as a separate or isolated issue. We have witnessed a number of conflicts where the absence of the rule of law, the presence of undemocratic and unaccountable Governments and weak security services have helped the illegal exploitation of natural resources to flourish. Therefore, issues like democracy, good governance, the rule of law, transparency and fair distribution of revenues and security-sector reform are inextricably linked to the problem we are discussing today.

It is especially important that in post-conflict States resources are transformed into a positive tool that can be used to encourage peace and stability and to contribute to development and post-conflict recovery. In that regard, we believe that peacebuilding initiatives should address the reform of resource management at an early stage in post-conflict situations and peacebuilding. The management of resources must be more transparent, efficient and equitable, and subject to both the rule of law and good governance. In that regard, it will be important for the Peacebuilding Commission to pay special attention to the issue of natural resources in its efforts to manage post-conflict situations.

Through resolution 1625 (2005), the Security Council has already reaffirmed its determination to take action against the illegal exploitation of, and trafficking in, natural resources and high-value commodities in areas where it contributes to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict. In that regard, the Security Council should closely monitor and analyse the role of resources in conflicts that are on the agenda of the Council and take the necessary action.

One of the crucial areas of the Security Council's responsibility in this field is related to the implementation of sanctions regimes.

Sanctions can be instrumental in limiting the scope of a conflict and maintaining and restoring peace and stability. At the same time, sanctions should be utilized with much more prudence so as not to further degrade the humanitarian conditions of the victims of the conflict. In the field of individual sanctions more should be done to target those who benefit from the illegal exploitation of natural resources. There is also scope for doing more to improve the effectiveness of sanctions regimes. Let us in this regard recall the valuable work performed by the working group on general issues of sanctions.

Last, but not least, the international community as a whole, and neighbouring countries in particular, have a crucial role to play in ensuring that resources are not used to sustain intra-State wars, or even begin wars. Much more attention needs to be paid to cross-border smuggling and trade in natural resources. International mechanisms, such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme or the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, should be further promoted.

There is another important question: the impunity of those responsible for looting minerals from resource-rich countries. These individuals should be prosecuted alongside those who are being brought to justice for major violations of human rights or international humanitarian law.

This all underlines the importance of today's thematic debate on natural resources, further supports the shift concerning natural resources and conflict from country-specific treatment to thematic consideration by the Security Council and points to the need for a more integrated role of the Council in this field and a more coherent United Nations approach.

To conclude, we support the draft presidential statement prepared by the Belgian presidency, and we support further Security Council discussion on natural resources and conflict and on ways of improving the United Nations response in this respect.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Mr. President, let me start by welcoming your presence with us, which underlines the importance of the debate on this subject, and by thanking your team for the very careful way in which they have prepared for these discussions.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe and the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for their insights and, if I may, align myself with what the German Ambassador will shortly say on behalf of the European Union.

I wish first to recognize that, for many countries, the transparent, well-regulated exploitation of natural resources is the engine of economic growth and represents opportunity for their populations. That is very welcome, but it is not the responsibility of this Council. What we think is right is that the Council should examine the links between natural resources and conflict, which are real and varied, and opine on that link.

Natural resources may cause conflict by being a target for rebels or aggressors. They may sometimes be the trigger for violent disputes over economic advantage. Poor governance of natural resources has been shown to increase the likelihood of conflict by making Governments less reliant on revenue from income tax. This may weaken the responsiveness of a Government to the needs of their population. And, in some circumstances, natural resources may sustain existing conflicts by being a source of financing for belligerent groups. The issues are complex, as this Council has recognized in its discussion of specific country cases previously.

The United Kingdom is committed to taking action to address these relationships at a number of different levels. The United Kingdom Government paper entitled "Preventing Violent Conflict", which was issued in April of this year, committed us to

> "work with the international community to tackle the common factors behind instability and violent conflict, including the trade in conflict resources, whether timber, diamonds or other minerals".

And, in London, a cross-Government task force is coordinating our actions on these areas.

We also support existing efforts, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Kimberley Process, each previously addressed by colleagues. And we provide bilateral support for capacity-building projects for the mediation of resource disputes in various countries and regions, including in Ghana, Nigeria and the Middle East. These regulatory approaches are important in promoting transparency and accountability, but the role of natural resources in conflict goes well beyond the use of finance to support warring parties. Links between natural resource revenues, bad governance and violent conflict need to be tackled primarily through the reform of political systems and structures of governance. This requires responses tailored to individual situations, involving Governments, the international community, the private sector and civil society, and we should base those responses on further analysis of how natural resources affect and influence the action and capabilities of all parties.

We believe that there is a need for a coherent international approach in each situation. And we welcome the language in the proposed presidential statement to be adopted at the end of today's meeting, which echoes this point.

We also need to consider the role of the Security Council in this context, both in enhancing the work of others to prevent conflict by addressing the issue of governance and in taking the lead to restore peace and security when conflict has occurred. When the Council prepares the mandates and activities of peacekeeping operations, we believe that it should assess the role of natural resources in the conflict and the destabilization that may arise as a result of misuse and competition. That dimension should be considered, and the Council should decide whether or not it is relevant in the context of a proposed mandate for a peace support operation.

The Security Council is therefore required, we believe, to make an assessment of the role of natural resources in the conflict, to discuss appropriate actions to take, and to examine the impact of missions themselves. This is not Council encroachment. The economic benefits of developing resources are not for the Council — let me repeat — but, as appropriate, they would be for the Peacebuilding Commission and other bodies, which could consider the contribution that resources make.

A permanent centre of expertise within the United Nations on issues related to conflict and natural resources might indeed be a useful way of bringing more coherence and defining a clearer policy framework for United Nations action.

We believe that these pragmatic steps could enhance the role of the Security Council in coordinating and enhancing international action. Furthermore, the Council should continue to work on these issues following our debate today.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. Minister, we are pleased to welcome you as President of the Security Council and to

congratulate you on Belgium's successful presidency of the Council this month.

In regions of crisis, particularly in States in which the proper mechanisms for regulating of the use of natural resources are insufficiently developed, problems arising from illegal operations can lead to armed confrontation and the escalation of conflict. Combating the illicit use of natural resources is, first and foremost, the prerogative and obligation of the Government of the State concerned.

The way to tackle the problem, we believe, is to strengthen State structures, including through reform of the security sector, development of the judicial system and of border and customs control, and the eradication of crime and corruption. The primary role of the United Nations in this process should be to help States, at their request, by providing political and advisory support. The sanction mechanisms of the Security Council and their expert groups contribute in that context, in those cases where the relevant crisis situations are before the Council. We should be guided in that by the Charter principles of non-interference in internal affairs, sovereignty, territorial integrity and the political independence of States.

It is important to maintain a balance between the efforts of the international community to prevent the fuelling of armed conflicts through the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and the strict observance of the sovereign right of States to use their natural resources and to their own national policy on the use of natural resources. A positive example of that is the adoption by the States of the Great Lakes region of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region and the protocol on combating the illicit exploitation of natural resources within it.

A substantial role in the settlement and resolution of the armed conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire has been played by sanctions regimes introduced by the Security Council regulating the export of diamonds and valuable timber by those States. At the same time, in the sanctions practice of the United Nations it is important that we continue to be guided by criteria for the lifting of sanctions and for the consideration of the humanitarian consequences.

Today's theme is broad and goes beyond the competence of the Security Council. Its further consideration should involve the relevant specialized bodies of the United Nations system, including the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Second Committee of the General Assembly. Establishing productive interaction between those bodies will favour an effective solution to the problems we are considering.

The President: We have come to the end of the list of members of the Security Council. I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Belgium.

(*spoke in French*)

Like other members of the international community, Belgium attempts to make its contribution to the international response to the problem of the exploitation of natural resources in a number of ways. We were one of the pioneer members of the Kimberley Process, and we participate actively in it. The last meeting of the Process was held in Brussels just a few weeks ago. Moreover, Belgium recently decided to make an important contribution to the International Tropical Timber Organization initiative, and a year ago we set up a scientific task force, on Mineral Resources in Central Africa, to study the feasibility of tracking mechanisms for copper and cobalt in Katanga.

Last February, we organized an international conference on the sustainable management of forests in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we decided to bring that matter to the agenda of the Council today. In organizing the debate, Belgium hoped to achieve two objectives. The first is that the Council should in general recognize that natural resources can be a destabilizing factor and reaffirm the central idea that good governance of natural resources is important, not only for development but also for peace and security. That is particularly true in countries emerging from a conflict in which natural resources were a factor.

In the Congo, it is essential that the exploitation of the enormous natural wealth of the country benefit the entire population, if we wish to see lasting stability and avoid a relapse into civil war in the near future. Liberia has understood that well and has made the management of natural resources a central element of its (GMAP) programme of assistance for rebuilding the country. That is also true more generally in institutionally fragile countries that are facing the need to manage their wealth in natural resources, such as Timor-Leste. Those countries need international support to ensure that their natural resources will be an opportunity for them, and not a curse.

Having said that, it is clear that I am not advocating that the international community become involved in the management of the natural resources of each country. That, of course, remains the responsibility of national authorities. On the contrary, it is a question of strengthening that responsibility and making sure that the exploitation of natural resources does not escape State control nor be used against the State. Setting up mechanisms for international cooperation can help in achieving that objective.

We must also make accountable the various actors involved in the exploitation of natural resources accountable, in particular the private sector. Cooperation and accountability are at the heart of the initiatives I have already mentioned. In the same spirit, it is necessary to give greater thought to mechanisms for certification or for tracking certain commodities, as Belgium is doing today for certain minerals in the Congo. We must also promote the efforts of institutions such as the World Bank to provide assistance and targeted advice on the management of natural resources.

Why do we wish to discuss the topic in the Security Council? Once again, it is obvious that the Council is not attempting to provide any kind of guardianship over efforts not related to its competencies and which are better placed with other organs, national or international. But those initiatives have an impact on international peace and security, and that is the primary responsibility of the Council. The Council has a duty to promote awareness of the fact that security and development are linked, and to encourage all actors involved in managing natural resources to bear that in mind. It is therefore up to the Security Council to highlight complementarity between those initiatives and its own actions and to encourage them so they can contribute to peace.

I now come to my second objective: consideration of the Council's own actions. The Council is no stranger to the question of the role of natural resources in conflicts and in the past it has used some of its instruments for responding to that issue. However, such action can be reinforced and made more systematic. In the management of conflicts, the Council should examine earlier on whether or not the dimension of natural resources needs to be taken into account.

For example, groups of experts have proved to be a useful instrument in shedding light on mechanisms by which natural resources can be exploited in order to fuel conflict, but the quality of their work is uneven. It should be possible to build within the Secretariat a more permanent centre of expertise to support their work. That question must also be raised when drafting the mandates of peacekeeping operations, which could include a specific expertise component, when required. Moreover, the Security Council could pay greater attention to the complementarity between its actions aimed at peace and security and the post-conflict phase, where reconstruction and development become the central objectives. We must consider further, in particular, the conditions to be met for lifting a specific embargo. Undoubtedly, there is still work to be done in cooperation with the Peacebuilding Commission.

I am particularly pleased that this discussion has taken place. It would be useful to pursue it in greater depth in the future, not only in the Council but elsewhere as well. Although we may have differences of opinion on certain specific aspects of the problem, I hope I can count on the support of all Council members in that respect.

I now resume my functions as President.

I now call on the representative of Germany.

Mr. Von Ungern-Sternberg (Germany): First of all, Mr. Minister, I would like to join others in welcoming your presence at this very important meeting.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The theme of today's debate has many aspects: prevention of the conflict, crisis management, sanctions regimes, peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding, governance and cooperation among various actors at the national and international levels. Let me share our perspective and explain some of the activities of the European Union in this field.

The European Union recognized at an early stage the importance of addressing the exploitation of natural

resources as a cause of and factor contributing to conflicts. We welcome the fact that the Security Council has tried to limit the disastrous effects that the improper exploitation of resources can have in conflict-prone situations. Imposing sanctions on commodities such as diamonds and timber helped to end conflicts in Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

There is still room for improving the effectiveness of sanctions by coupling them with other measures so that, together, they can better limit the scope of a conflict or even bring an end to it. Making greater use of past experience, for example, by strengthening the institutional memory within the United Nations Secretariat and the various groups of experts could be one element of improvement.

Despite the positive effect of the Kimberley Process on the exploitation of "blood diamonds", we face new risks. The number of oil-producing countries with poor populations is increasing, especially in Africa. Some of those States are extremely fragile, with rebel movements contesting the authority of the Government. Here, the United Nations as a whole, including the Security Council, has an important task: monitoring such situations before a conflict can break out.

As water is becoming a scarce resource sought after by competing users in some parts of the world, an integrated approach to its management can also foster security and stability. The EU Water Initiative contributes to sustainable development and the peaceful use of this essential resource.

An important question is: under what circumstances should a natural resource be considered a so-called conflict resource? The Secretariat could possibly provide some guidance in that respect. A common understanding of the issue would certainly help to shape a more coherent approach on the part of the international community.

Good governance is key to preventing conflicts over the sharing of revenue derived from natural resources. Therefore, the EU promotes transparency and responsible management of resources. The Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program in Liberia is a good example of how better accountability can contribute to stabilizing a country in a post-conflict situation. We think it has helped the Liberian people, because, with improved oversight, more money remains in the State budget.

Obviously, it is not only States that can contribute to improving the proper governance of natural resources; producers, traders and consumers are also key actors. Monitoring and certification schemes such as the Kimberley Process, currently chaired by the European Commission, play an important role in preventing the use of revenue derived from natural resources for conflict purposes.

The EU is also committed to initiatives aimed at improving revenue transparency, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which receives funding from the European Commission. The endorsement of that initiative by the Security Council and the General Assembly would certainly be very welcome. We have also started integrating provisions aimed at supporting good governance of the mining sector into some of our country programmes, such as that for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Obviously, accountable and transparent natural resource management is also important during the post-conflict phase. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities need to take due account of that concern.

A conflict resources facility will shortly be developed within the new EU Stability Instrument so that we can better tackle resources and conflict as a cross-cutting issue. Our goal is to make resources a catalyst for development in commodity-rich countries. We will pursue those aims in close cooperation with the United Nations system and other relevant actors. Therefore, we welcome the draft presidential statement to be adopted today, and we look forward to follow-up on a more coordinated approach by the United Nations and the regional organizations and Governments concerned.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Baum (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate, because the issue of natural resources and conflict is important to Switzerland. We also thank you for the high quality of the document (S/2007/?34) with which you have provided us.

There is no doubt that natural resources are among the principal factors causing many armed conflicts. The issue is broad and complex. Different types of natural resources give rise to different challenges, which also vary in terms of the local or

regional context and the actors involved. I shall thus confine myself to highlighting a few aspects, and my statement will focus on six points.

First, if we want to resolve a conflict, we must know its root causes. The Security Council should thus have a well-informed discussion and identify the sources of a conflict before taking a decision. The Secretary-General should inform the Council about the links between natural resources and conflict in general and, if necessary, examine that relationship in country-specific reports.

Secondly, conflicts are often financed through the exploitation of natural resources. The Security Council has made much progress in formulating sanctions capable of reducing the revenue of armed groups in specific conflicts. It has imposed embargoes on some resources, such as oil, diamonds and timber. The case of Liberia has shown that the parties to the conflict rely on various resources to finance their activities. The Security Council must thus be prepared to react swiftly to changes in the way in which armed groups obtain their revenue.

Thirdly, the Security Council could considerably strengthen its sanctions regimes by always providing its experts and monitoring groups with clear mandates and precise terms of reference, as well as adequate administrative support from the Secretariat. It should devise tools to improve coordination among those groups, establish institutional memory, create best practices and take advantage of lessons learned.

Fourthly, sanctions are not a panacea. The link between conflict and natural resources generally arises in States with weak institutions. Therefore, sanctions must include a comprehensive strategy to fight corruption, rebuild institutions, re-establish the rule of law and diversify the economy.

In addition, when establishing a United Nations peace mission, the Security Council should examine the usefulness of creating an environment and natural resources management unit, as in, for example, the case in Liberia. Moreover, new legal and economic instruments may have to be developed to specifically target the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Existing instruments such as the Kimberley Process and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative have set good examples in this regard.

Fifthly, wealth-sharing is a pivotal question in peace negotiations. Prime examples are the wealth-sharing clauses in the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement or the Aceh Memorandum of Understanding. The question of wealth-sharing in peace processes is essential to ending conflict, and also in providing the signatories with the necessary means for beginning post-conflict reconstruction. As such, it should facilitate the transformation of war economies into peace economies for beginning the benefit of the civilian population, which pays the highest price in conflicts.

Political power-sharing without wealth-sharing will lead to a fragile peace agreement that is likely to fail. Therefore, greater efforts are needed to pool experience on the role of wealth-sharing, especially at the local and community level where the exploitation of natural resources happens. Here, the Mediation Support Unit within the Department for Political Affairs could play an important role, on condition that it is provided with the necessary resources and support.

Sixthly, Switzerland is concerned about the risks arising from overexploitation of renewable natural resources. Water and soil should receive greater attention in the context of conflict prevention. Scarcity of these resources and their mismanagement, and lack of equitable access to them, can lead to famine, forced migration, poverty, political instability and eventually to armed conflict. We must develop measures to deal with those potential causes of conflict. One measure could be to promote integrated water resources management rather than focusing mainly on increasing the availability of water. Another measure relates to the promotion of property rights. We should further explore lessons learned in setting up and implementing suitable property rights systems, which must also take the local customary practices into account if they are to be effective. The work of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, and in particular of its Working Group on Property Rights, should be taken into consideration in this undertaking.

Let me conclude by underlining that consumption patterns in industrialized countries can result in scarcity and in price increases of natural resources. This in turn raises the risk of conflict and is an incentive to the illegitimate control or illegal exploitation of these commodities. Therefore, efforts must be made to reduce global consumption of those

particular resources, such as oil, gas, and water, to an equitable and sustainable level.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group. I wish at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate on such an important issue. I would also like to congratulate the Belgian presidency of the Security Council for having chosen to highlight the link between natural resources and conflict. This issue is, in fact, at the crossroads of international peace and security, development and protection of the environment. Those themes are intimately linked and must be tackled together.

Even though no country is safe from this scourge, developing countries are generally the most affected by the consequences of illegal exploitation of natural resources. We should recall that the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development raised awareness about the fragility of our natural resources. This was reaffirmed at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development of 2002, where a call was made to improve the quality of life for the world population without increased utilization of natural resources beyond our planet's limits.

The Security Council is certainly not the only body focusing on this issue. In that regard, it is important to remember that since 1988 the General Assembly has been considering the causes of conflict in Africa and stressing the complexity of the multidimensional and interdependent problems of our continent.

Africa has long been aware of the importance of natural resources to its development and stability; in 1968 it adopted the Algiers Convention on conservation, which was revised in 2003. Since its creation in 2002, the African Union has demonstrated its authority by addressing the numerous challenges facing the African continent. Among these, the quest for peace and security is undoubtedly the most pressing. Indeed, during the last few years, the number of violent conflicts has diminished considerably, and significant progress has been achieved thanks to the determination and collective efforts of African countries. The situations in countries including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are examples of this encouraging tendency. However, too many African countries are still affected by the pernicious cycle of conflicts and their destructive consequences.

The underlying causes of conflicts in Africa were determined in the former Secretary-General's report published in 1998 (S/1998/318) in which he tried to set out the dynamics of conflict by distinguishing between facilitating factors, mobilizing factors, triggering factors and deep-rooted causes. In this picture, the illegal exploitation of natural resources appears both as a cause of conflicts and as an exacerbating factor in ongoing conflicts. Hence the complexity of the problem and the difficulty to understand it, especially if more effective action is to be undertaken to prevent conflict and restore peace.

Aware of the link between conflict and natural resources, African countries and their international partners are making increasing efforts to break this link, in order to achieve peace and development on the continent. By arousing greed or by financing military operations, natural resources have played a negative role in several wars in different parts of the world, mainly in Africa, with its unlimited natural wealth. This is a fundamental challenge, the consequences of which have an impact on peace, security and sustainable development in affected countries.

Conflict diamonds are probably the best-known symbol of the link between resources and conflict. In this regard, we would like to express our appreciation for the interest that the United Nations has consistently shown in the problem of conflict diamonds. In December 2000, the General Assembly launched an international certification programme for rough diamonds — the Kimberley Process — aimed at tightening control of the diamonds trade and preventing the marketing of war diamonds. Initiated by several African countries, mainly those affected by the illicit trade of diamonds, the Kimberley Process is the main international initiative to formulate practical measures to deal with this issue.

Other national and regional initiatives aimed at restricting the illicit trade in other natural resources have also been put in place. This normative process began thanks in part to the efforts of a number of States and regional groups, particularly in Africa. All these efforts should reinforce national and international control measures aimed at preventing natural resources being used to finance warmakers.

The situation of African countries emerging from conflict deserves particular attention. Mechanisms must be set up to assist the countries concerned in promoting the responsible management of resources and in ensuring the equitable distribution of wealth among all stakeholders in order to minimize the likelihood of the resumption of conflict. In paragraph 55 of his report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/61/213), the Secretary-General notes that:

> "Inadequate global economic and financial regulations, high profit margins and weak administrative and technical capacity in a number of African countries make managing the natural resource sector particularly difficult."

In conclusion, an important prerequisite for conflict prevention is mobilization on the part of international community to assist developing countries in their efforts to manage their natural resources in a sustainable manner in order to promote their development processes. Bilateral cooperation institutions, donor organizations and other international bodies should provide greater assistance to African countries in order to strengthen their management capacities in the area of natural resources. Such assistance could involve helping to enhance national capacities and structures in the economic, administrative and customs-related areas and establishing new follow-up mechanisms for the extraction industries.

The international community must act collectively to ensure that natural resources are no longer a threat to peace but an asset to development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Senegal.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset warmly to congratulate Belgium on its timely initiative to propose a process of reflection and a public debate of the Security Council on the problem of natural resources and conflicts.

Be it water, oil, diamonds or timber — to mention just a few types of natural resources — in many instances those gifts of nature, whose exploitation and development revenues should have helped to improve the social welfare of peoples, have instead brought misery to those same peoples.

In paragraph 65 of his report (A/59/285) dated 20 August 2004, entitled "Implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", the Secretary-General states:

> "The management of natural resources deserves further attention on the continent and by the international community."

He adds in paragraph 66 that:

> "As most of the intractable conflicts on the continent come to an end, the durability of peace will depend greatly on the capacity of each new Government to take control of the natural resources and manage the wealth of the State in a transparent and accountable manner that will benefit its people."

That excerpt from the report of the Secretary-General highlights one of the problems related to a country's natural resources — namely, their responsible, equitable and productive management at the economic and social levels.

However, the difficulties arising from the existence of natural resources in a State go beyond good governance or good management and involve a number of other actors such as neighbouring States or importing States, which may be interested in those natural resources, as well as multinational companies and other non-State actors, which are often intimately involved in the exploitation of such resources.

The diversity and number of interested actors further complicates the question before us and suggests that to deal with it effectively, the international community should adopt, in each case, a comprehensive strategy that encompasses all of the actors that have been determined, or are assumed, to be involved.

Any strategy for dealing with this problem should also take into account important data such as rapid environmental changes, allocation of revenues generated by the exploitation of natural resources, and changes in consumption patterns that exacerbate resource scarcity and promote cut-throat competition among the actors.

Under these circumstances, we deem it important that the international community stress dialogue, consultation and mediation among the actors concerned. The latter should be encouraged to place the common interest over their particular interests.

In the case of countries in the grip of civil war or faced with a rebellion, the international community should ensure that revenues deriving from the exploitation of natural resources are not used to finance the activities of the conflicting parties. In that respect, the Security Council should continue to be stringent in the imposition and implementation of individual sanctions, such freezing the assets or restricting the movement of certain belligerents. In several cases, particularly in Africa, such sanctions have proved effective and decisive.

We also welcome the launch of the Kimberley Process in 2000. That programme, which enjoys the support of the United Nations, is aimed at putting an end to the illegal trade in diamonds and other precious stones coming from conflict zones. In the context of that programme, all diamonds coming from participating countries must be accompanied by a certificate of authenticity indicating their origin.

However, the Kimberley Process's weakness lies in the fact that it is not binding and depends on the goodwill of States, companies and diamond traders. That goodwill is not always present.

That is why it may be time for the international community to consider ways and means by which the aforementioned sanctions could be expanded to certain multinational companies whose conduct is not always beyond reproach.

We should like here to encourage the initiative launched in 2002 by a coalition of 300 non-governmental organization and civil society groups which are carrying out a campaign entitled "Publish what you pay", aimed at encouraging multinational oil companies to be more transparent as regards the modalities of their contracts in Africa and elsewhere.

We wish also to stress the importance of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative — launched in 2003 by the British Government — which is aimed at improving management of the revenues emanating from oil, gas and the extractive industries. The primary goal is to encourage multinational companies to be more transparent and accountable in that respect.

All this more than demonstrates that any strategy to control the link between natural resources and conflict, if it is to be effective, should involve multinational companies upstream and down. Moreover, we should responsibly acknowledge that the international community, and the Security Council above all, ought to be more attentive to the actions of certain States that, coveting the natural resources of other countries, do not hesitate to foment instability in the latter by supporting rebellions or by fuelling and perpetuating civil war. Such actions are contrary to the United Nations Charter and demand a forceful reaction if we do not wish the race for increasingly rare natural resources to pose a serious threat to international peace and security.

Finally, given the growing scarcity of certain natural resources that remain necessary to the functioning of our industrial civilization, the international community should continue to consider the best way to promote alternative energies. Such action, if decisive, would reduce the heavy pressure on existing natural resources and have an impact on the conflicts and tensions which the pernicious misuse of revenues from the exploitation of such resources might give rise to.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Elbakly (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to welcome you to New York, Sir, and to express our pleasure at seeing you preside over this meeting.

We also welcome this open debate and the efforts of the Security Council, along with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, to prevent the use of natural resources to ignite and fuel conflicts. The Egyptian delegation would like to associate itself with the statement of the Permanent Representative of Tunisia on behalf of the African Group on this issue.

Undoubtedly, the link between natural resources and conflicts lies at the very centre of the intersection between the prerogatives of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on an equal footing with the Security Council, each within the limits of its responsibilities as set forth in the Charter of the United

Nations. Such a matter requires us to address the issue in all its aspects through full coordination and transparency among the three principal organs in order to ensure the complementarity of our efforts and the effectiveness of international action to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources from inflaming conflicts and to orient the use of those resources towards the realization of sustainable development and peoples' aspirations to peace and prosperity.

The proliferation of the trade in small arms and light weapons is intricately correlated with the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the African continent. That is especially true of oil, diamonds and tropical timber, which are controlled by some States, individuals and arms brokers in a manner that endangers African States' capacity for socio-economic development; leads to the spread of disease, poverty and unemployment; and diminishes their institutional capacity and the pillars of their economic infrastructure. That highlights the need for the international community to make concerted and collective efforts to confront a phenomenon that undermines all efforts to control conflicts. It also contributes to the frustration of the efforts of the Security Council in conflict areas, and those of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in post-conflict peacebuilding.

In that context, the United Nations must act more effectively and seriously and develop creative methods to achieve the objective of maintaining international peace and security, particularly in Africa. While we appreciate the Security Council's eagerness to dispatch special missions to conflict regions and to establish direct communication channels with the parties to conflicts and to mediate between them, as well as its determination to coordinate with the peace and security structures of the African Union, we foresee that more will need to be done to settle and contain conflicts in a manner that addresses their root causes and decreases dependence on arms as a means of resolving disputes and conflicts, while reinforcing the ability of the Council to implement the collective security system prescribed in the Charter.

According to the outcome of the United Nations Expert Group meeting held under the theme "Natural resources and conflict in Africa: transforming a peace liability into a peace asset", which was hosted by Egypt in June 2006, the main approach to developing methods to deal with conflicts in Africa and other regions of the world is based on lessons learned. Those lessons highlight the fact that prevention is better than exorbitant cure, and that there is a need to expand cooperation and coordination and to establish a real partnership among the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, regional and subregional organizations, and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes dealing with the development aspects of the causes of conflict.

Such long-sought cooperation between the international and regional systems represents, in our view, an effective early warning mechanism that would protect all peoples from the atrocities of conflicts and their destructive impact on the socio-economic and political infrastructure, the rule of law and respect for and reinforcement of human rights. The starting point in that regard, in light of the outcome of the Cairo meeting, is strengthening national capacities for the management of natural resources in order to ensure their optimal utilization, based on the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources, as set forth in the Charter and reiterated by the General Assembly in its resolution 1803 (XVII) of 1962.

It follows that the international community must address conflicts holistically in all their political, social and economic dimensions, and in a framework that harmonizes the security and political efforts of the United Nations with the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the infrastructures of States emerging from conflict. That is particularly pertinent as regards the implementation of programmes for institutional capacity-building; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in civilian life; demining; control of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons; and the contribution to sponsoring national reconciliation processes and to laying the foundations for reconstruction and sustainable development. It will surely require continued international financial support to enable those bodies to undertake difficult and critical peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions in various regions.

From that perspective, Egypt welcomes the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission to reformulate the role of the United Nations in dealing with the cases of such States in a manner that transcends the traditional dimensions of peacemaking and peacekeeping to achieve a balanced and comprehensive vision for the transition from conflict to

reconstruction and sustainable development. That will require a holistic and multidimensional approach that rests on strengthening the institutional and human capacities of those States and emphasizes the principle of national ownership, without attempting to impose trusteeship or conditionalities, and coordinates international and regional efforts with the participation of civil society and all relevant stakeholders towards achieving that objective.

Clearly, our work to prevent the draining of the natural riches of countries in conflict in exchange for weapons that fuel the continuation and escalation of such conflicts requires a special effort from the arms-producing countries to guarantee their commitment to international controls and to their legal and moral obligations. It also requires the General Assembly to continue to develop international arrangements regulating arms tracing from the producers to conflict situations and standardizing the rules of trade and brokering.

Natural resources must remain the basis for economic development and the realization of the aspirations of future generations. They must not be exploited so that States, individuals and corporations can make greater fortunes. The Security Council will therefore have to depart from a narrow framework in dealing with this issue and extend a hand of cooperation to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in order to undertake collective efforts that will serve to realize our common goals.

In conclusion, we cannot fail to state the importance of giving serious consideration to the proposal made today by the representative of Tunisia: to hold an international conference on this issue. Such a conference should take place in the context of the General Assembly and should address all aspects of the issue.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Belgium for having chosen the subject the maintenance of international peace and security for today's open debate of the Security Council. I would also like to thank Mr. Pascoe, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council for their statements.

There is an undeniable link between development and international stability, or, to put it another way, between poverty, instability and conflict in the context of domestic and international relations. It is noteworthy that many of the countries that have experienced conflict in recent years are rich in such natural resources as diamonds, gold, timber, oil and copper, to name but a few. Paradoxically, the exploitation of those sources of wealth has contributed to fuelling or prolonging conflicts. Especially in some regions of Africa, armed groups often use those resources to finance their activities and defend the territories where those resources are located from State control. Likewise, a country's entire dependence on its natural resources generally results in great vulnerability, given that an economy centred on a single element has a higher risk of experiencing ongoing economic crises once international conditions for that commodity worsen. The result of that is an increased chance that conflict will break out.

During its membership of the Security Council, Argentina therefore supported the imposition or continuation of embargoes on diamonds and timber from certain countries on the agenda of the Council in which resources were being used by armed groups to finance their activities. Argentina has also supported the Kimberley Process to establish an international system of certification of the origin of raw diamonds that would make it possible to lift embargoes from States once they could guarantee the source of diamonds, so that the income generated from that resource could help those countries attain sustainable development, which would help them to avert a relapse into conflict during the peacebuilding phase.

An objective mechanism is in place for diamonds, namely, the Kimberley Process. However, with regard to other natural resources, in order to make the transition from sanctions imposed on a country to the lifting of sanctions during the peacebuilding stage, there is a need for greater cooperation and coordination among the Security Council, regional organizations and the Peacebuilding Commission so that the Commission's assistance to countries in conflict can make it possible not only for the Council to lift sanctions in connection with the exploitation of natural resources but also for natural resources to become a source of sustainable development for the Governments in question.

With regard to the mandates of peacekeeping operations, the Secretary-General's recent comprehensive report on strengthening the capacity of the Organization to administer and support peacekeeping operations underscores the fact that the complexity of mandates has resulted in an increase in the number of integrated missions. The report proposes the establishment of integrated operational groups comprising officers from various United Nations departments. The groups would be responsible for day-to-day support for all aspects of peacekeeping operations, including the coordination and preparation of recommendations for the planning and implementation of policy strategies and the achievement of integrated operational objectives. With regard to peacekeeping operations in countries where illegal exploitation of natural resources is taking place, we believe that these integrated operational groups could also include experts in the area of natural resources, so that the Secretariat's recommendations could also serve to adjust the mandates of peacekeeping operations in that regard.

We would also like to emphasize that the Security Council's authority to impose sanctions on the illegal exploitation of natural resources in countries that are on the Council's agenda due to a specific conflict that threatens international peace and security is clearly among the powers conferred upon the Security Council by the Charter of the United Nations. Nevertheless, the situation would be different if the Council were to determine that preventive intervention were necessary due to a potential risk that exploitation of a given country's natural resources could in the future lead to a conflict that could pose a threat to international peace and security. That would violate the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States that is set out in the Charter of the United Nations, because the basis for intervention would then be the remote consequences that the sovereign actions of a country could possibly have for international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): I would like to begin by expressing my thanks and appreciation to Mr. Karel de Gucht, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, as well as the Belgian delegation, for having taken the initiative to organize this timely debate on natural resources and conflict. Let me also express our appreciation for the diligent and expert preparations undertaken in advance of this meeting through the holding of seminars and the drafting of a concept paper (S/2007/334, annex).

We are aware that this is the first time that the Security Council has held a thematic debate on this topic. We recognize that the proper management of natural resources is a very significant issue relating to the various phases of conflict, including conflict prevention, conflict management, post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery and reconstruction. With that in mind, we appreciate the fact that the concept paper has been organized in such a way as to present the necessary viewpoints to the problem while incorporating the direct and indirect influence of natural resources on conflicts.

With regard to the appropriate approach to addressing this issue, I would like to point out the following three elements.

First, several initiatives are already under way in this area in the international community in order to address various issues, in particular efforts aimed at improving governance from different perspectives. Many stakeholders, including international organizations, Governments, businesses and civil society, are involved in those initiatives. In order for such efforts to be more effective, it is essential for each of those sectors to take a serious approach to this problem and study it in a systematic way.

Secondly, we must promote better use of existing initiatives. To that end, it is necessary to encourage the participation of a greater number of countries, including those with emerging economies, in such initiatives as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Kimberley Process. In that regard, we should also give due attention to the efforts of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), which has been implementing measures to halt illegal logging and providing support for better governance in tropical forest regions. Last month, Liberia expressed its intention to be reintegrated into the ITTO, and we look forward to expanded participation in the ITTO by other nations. With particular regard to the issue of governance in post-conflict countries, we believe that it is important to make the best use of existing international organizations that have the requisite knowledge and experience in this area.

Thirdly, given the fact that, in many cases, conflicts in Africa have a regional dimension, it is important as well to emphasize regional undertakings. Proceeding from that point of view, if countries in the Great Lakes region were to demonstrate an enhanced commitment to the ongoing regional process, it might become a touchstone for the solution of this problem.

Now I would like to discuss ways in which the Security Council might conduct its own actions. First, as mentioned earlier, in considering a variety of initiatives, the Security Council should consider which items are worthy of discussion, taking into account the purpose for which each initiative was launched or established.

Secondly, as indicated in the concept paper, while the Security Council has various options available to it, such as commodity sanctions, the establishment of groups of experts and the creation of peacekeeping operations, it is critical for the Security Council to give careful consideration to when and how the Council can suitably transform the sanction-driven approach to a development-based approach. In such cases, the level of commitment of the Government concerned becomes the crucial basis for the decision. In this regard, the case of Liberia provides an instructive example. In Liberia, forestry reform and participation in the Kimberley Process have been promoted through the Security Council's presentation of clear conditions for the lifting of sanctions.

Thirdly, although sanction measures may be effective tools to restore international peace and stability, it is necessary to consider what kind of sanction measures will be effective by taking into account the specific situation at hand.

Fourthly, the reinforcement of relations between the Security Council and other relevant bodies is required. This is especially true with regard to the Peacebuilding Commission. The various undertakings of the Security Council should be reflected seamlessly in the Commission's activities, including in the elaboration of an integrated peacebuilding strategy.

For the Security Council, it is essential to follow up the outcome of today's debate. In this connection, we would appreciate it if the Council would consider ways to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of its actions.

Japan participates actively in the international framework, having taken part in the Kimberley Process from its inception and serving as host to the ITTO. Additionally, in the bilateral context, Japan has been providing significant support to African countries in the area of capacity-building through its programmes for technical training in Japan. This issue also has been taken up in the Group of 8 (G-8) process, and as chair of the G-8 for 2008 and co-organizer of the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), which is also scheduled for next year, Japan intends to continue its active engagement in this problem.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Outlule (Botswana): Let me begin by stating that the delegation of Botswana aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the African Group. I also wish to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate. It is a welcome initiative, and we commend your leadership. The debate should contribute to the promotion of awareness and greater understanding of how a combination of factors and individuals can conspire to exploit natural resources in a manner that causes conflict.

There are several questions that demand answers. The delegation of Botswana wishes to submit that, in our view, the debate is really about natural resources and development. How can we ensure that natural resources are exploited for the common good?

The conflict over natural resources is neither new nor unique to Africa. Throughout history, there have been many examples of conflict over land, wildlife and water resources. The link between natural resources and conflict probably began when humankind started hunting and gathering. The scramble for Africa by colonial Powers, for instance, entailed conflict with Africans over their natural resources. The challenge we face is how to eliminate this age-old evil of grabbing and fighting over natural resources. The seeds of conflict are sown when a group of people either grab what does not belong to them or try to exclude others from benefiting from their national heritage.

For most developing countries, natural resources should really be a source of hope and opportunity for a better future rather than a threat or a curse. Botswana can indeed attest to the good that diamonds can do, for

instance. There can be no doubt however that, left alone, diamonds cannot do anything. Positive and innovative actions, policies and practices by people, combined with good leadership, are critical to putting a resource to good use.

Botswana fully supports the Kimberley Process. It is a practical mechanism underpinned by General Assembly and Security Council resolutions calling for accountable and transparent internal controls and systems at the national level, as well as international measures to monitor and track the trade in rough diamonds. Today, almost all international trade in diamonds is processed through the Kimberley Process, and diamonds have become a major source of funding for social progress and economic development in many countries, particularly in Africa. The Kimberley Process continues to be a major success in curbing production and trade in conflict diamonds.

There is agreement on the urgent need to effectively prevent conflict over natural resources. In doing so, we should not establish mechanisms that create conditionalities for trade in natural resources and place a heavy burden on exporting countries. That would be unfortunate, as it would set new trade barriers.

We must not demonize or stigmatize natural resources. Natural resources do not cause conflict. They simply do not. It is illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, human greed, mismanagement, corruption and exploitation that generate conflict. The seedlings of conflict, I repeat, are planted when the vast majority of citizens are excluded from enjoying the wealth of their national heritage.

There is no single way to address the issue of conflict over resources. We call for equal accountability for those who manufacture and export arms and those who do not use the proceeds of the sale of natural resources to produce food and provide education, health care, clean water and communications infrastructure, but rather subvert and divert such proceeds to purchase and import arms in order to perpetrate or fuel war on their populations.

We need a wise combination of measures to assist Africa to urgently and effectively tackle the challenges of underdevelopment. The phenomenon of natural resources and conflict is common in Africa because of the problem of underdevelopment. In the highly industrialized countries, it no longer exists because the economies are primarily dependent on science and technology and on highly skilled services.

If natural resources are demonized, the result will be that only natural resources from Africa would be excluded from international trade. Mechanisms that can have an adverse impact on the ability of African countries to profitably exploit their natural resources should be avoided.

Underdevelopment in Africa deserves urgent attention. Strong partnership, assured support and mutually beneficial cooperation in tackling this problem are needed; they are key to resolving the issue of natural resources and conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): At the outset, I would like to thank the Belgian presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate and giving us the opportunity to participate in the discussion on the complex relationship between natural resources and conflict.

As other speakers have pointed out before me, the theme of today's debate is a cross-cutting issue that includes the prevention of conflict and crises management, Security Council sanctions, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding, among other topics. We believe that a thematic debate by the Security Council on this issue is indeed timely.

The concept paper prepared by the Belgian presidency (S/2007/334, annex) provides an excellent basis for the discussion, underlining the complex link between natural resources and conflict and indicating how effective and responsible management of resources can contribute to post-conflict recovery. In too many cases, we have seen how exploitation of natural resources, even fish stocks, and high-value commodities has become a direct or indirect cause of conflict, as well as the financial means for maintaining it.

Good and transparent governance of natural resources is an essential ingredient in maintaining stability. In this context, we recognize the impact and value of the Kimberley Process vis-à-vis the exploitation of so-called blood diamonds. In some parts of the world, access to water is also increasingly becoming a source of conflict that we need to address.

As fossil fuels will become less accessible in the future, we need to ensure access to alternate energy sources.

In a broader context, I would also like to mention clear threats to security and democracy such as poverty, debt and environmental pollution. Among the biggest threats to stability and democracy in the future will be the unsustainable use of the world's natural resources and irreversible pollution. Security risks associated with global, regional and local conflicts over natural resources are increasingly becoming more central on the political agenda. Iceland participated in and welcomed the timely open debate held in the Security Council on 17 April on climate change and security (see S/PV.5663), organized by the British presidency of the Council.

Peacekeeping operations are one of the most important areas of United Nations activities, with a growing number of operations. We need to ensure that the current peacekeeping and peacebuilding work of the United Nations pays sufficient attention to responsible and effective resource management. The Peacebuilding Commission should also be an effective and flexible instrument in that context.

We would favour a stronger role for the Peacebuilding Commission regarding the post-conflict utilization of natural resources and environmental preservation. We need to address how the Security Council and other United Nations institutions can be better equipped to tackle this issue, but the Security Council has a key role to play, as outlined in resolution 1625 (2005).

There is a need to further enhance and promote systematic international cooperation on resource-related security, including regional cooperation. This debate will help to provide greater focus on this increasingly important issue.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): I have the honour today to speak on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ). The CANZ delegations welcome this open debate on natural resources and conflict. We congratulate Belgium on taking this valuable initiative and look forward to continued Belgian leadership on this issue in the Council.

After years of case-by-case, resource-by-resource activity by the Council, today's debate provides a timely opportunity for the Council to consider a more comprehensive approach to its work in this area. While the challenges are complex and multidimensional, there is no doubt that the Security Council has an important role to play both in breaking the link between natural resource exploitation and the fuelling of armed conflicts and in promoting effective natural resource management in fragile States and post-conflict peacebuilding situations.

Today's debate is also an opportunity to highlight the potential for effective management of natural resources to contribute to conflict prevention and to international peace and security. Natural resource revenues can be a force for sustained economic growth, social development, and stability.

Sadly, though, recent history has demonstrated that the often illicit extraction of natural resources has too frequently led to, deepened and prolonged conflicts by providing belligerents with both the incentive and the means to perpetuate campaigns of violence. Facilitated by economic globalization and access to international markets, many warring parties have turned to the predatory exploitation of lucrative natural resources such as timber, precious minerals and gemstones. Conflicts can develop a self-financing nature, with the revenues generated from the trade in conflict resources helping to procure weapons and military materiel, hire mercenaries, line the pockets of corrupt warlords and Government officials and buy the support of neighbouring regimes.

Action by the Council on the often illicit exploitation of resources has focused largely on the role of diamonds, with sanctions being imposed in four separate cases: Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. But we should not forget the other resources that have been the subject of the Council's attention, from support for a moratorium on log exports during the Cambodian civil war to the ban imposed on timber exports on Liberia during Charles Taylor's rule. And reports from the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo have identified a series of other resources, such as gold and coltan, as resources directly linked to instability in that volatile region.

Effective action to address the peace and security challenges that can arise from the exploitation of natural resources must necessarily be well coordinated with broader efforts related to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, resources governance and economic development. Building on the Council's successful cooperation with the Kimberley Process, stronger links could be forged within the United Nations system — including, as others have argued today, with the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Development Programme — the international financial institutions and international initiatives such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. There is a clear role here as well for the private sector, particularly through engagement with initiatives such as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Risk Awareness Tool for Multinational Enterprises in Weak Governance Zones, the Equator Principles and the International Financial Corporation Performance Standards.

While coordination with broader international efforts is indispensable, much of what needs to be done lies squarely within the mandate of the Security Council, including the imposition and monitoring of targeted sanctions regimes and the integration of natural resource issues into peacekeeping mandates and post-conflict peacebuilding strategies.

(*spoke in French*)

Targeted sanctions have been used in multiple contexts to address the link between resources and conflict. These mechanisms have been used to prevent the trade in a specific conflict resource, block the exchange of these resources for weapons, and disrupt the trade in conflict resources through asset freezes and travel bans. Experience has shown however that the effectiveness of sanctions depends both on systematic monitoring by panels of experts and thorough implementation within national jurisdictions.

United Nations missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have been directly involved in monitoring and securing sources of resources that have been linked to conflict and instability. Building on these experiences, future operations should be planned and deployed with an understanding of the nature and implications of the distribution of natural resources in their areas of operation.

The CANZ delegations strongly encourage the members of the Security Council to undertake an in-depth examination of the intersection between the exploitation of natural resources and the persistence, and in some cases intensification, of armed conflicts. We know that natural resources play a complex role in a number of contemporary civil wars. These issues have recurred in Council deliberations and will continue to do so.

In order to guarantee the maintenance of international peace and security, it remains essential that we take duly into account the unique role that the Security Council is called upon to play and the possibility of collaboration with other organizations and initiatives. Today's discussion is an important first step in that direction.

The President (*spoke in French*): As there are still several speakers on my list who have not yet had an opportunity to speak, I propose, with the consent of Council members, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5706

Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

5706th meeting

Tuesday, 26 June 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. De Gucht	(Belgium)
Members:	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Tachie-Menson
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Peru	Mr. Chávez
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Mlynár
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefings by Heads of the Security Council mission to Africa

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

Security Council mission

Briefings by Heads of the Security Council mission to Africa

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by the four ambassadors who led the Security Council mission to Africa: Mr. Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa, and Sir Emyr Jones Parry, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, who together led the mission to Addis Ababa, Khartoum and Accra; Mr. Jorge Voto-Bernales, Permanent Representative of Peru, who led the mission to Abidjan; and Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, Permanent Representative of France, who led the mission to Kinshasa.

Allow me, before I give the floor to the Heads of the Security Council mission, to say a few words.

Belgium welcomes the fact that the Security Council mission to Africa took place during the month of its presidency. My country, as the Council is aware, attaches particular importance to the African continent. Belgium is thus very pleased to note that its interest in Africa is shared by the Council and is reflected in its work.

I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Dumisani Kumalo, who, along with Ambassador Jones Parry, led the Security Council mission to Addis Ababa, Khartoum and Accra.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): It is an especially great honour for me, Mr. Minister, that you are presiding over this meeting today, because I know how much Belgium has been assisting us on the African continent.

My task today is to very briefly and informally recall the mission that I had the honour to lead, together with the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. There will be a report that will give all the necessary details about what happened. But I thought that I could perhaps take a few minutes to give the Council my own impressions of what took place.

One of the most useful things — something that is always useful when it happens — was the fact that we had significant time with the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa. We had meetings with Commissioner Djinnit, and an even longer meeting with President Konaré, Chairman of the Commission, and exchanged views in detail on issues that are before the Council. Speaking on behalf of my colleagues, I must say that we found their advice very useful in determining how they viewed some of the issues that they deal with on a day-by-day basis.

We also had a formal working meeting between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council. That in itself was also very significant, because we were able to exchange views on a variety of issues that come before the Security Council and that also come before the African Union Council in Addis Ababa. At the end of that meeting, we agreed on an outcome. We will very soon write to you, Mr. President, to ask that that outcome be reproduced as an official document of the Security Council so that it can be referred to in the future.

Two things stand out in that agreement. One was the desire of both Councils to see the exchange of views between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council happen every year, because of the issues that come before the Security Council that most of the time, originate from Addis Ababa. We therefore felt that it would be very useful if we could have a meeting together once a year.

The other thing that was important for those of us in Africa was an understanding that on peace and security matters the African Union always acts on behalf of the international community. It is therefore important that there should be an exchange of views between the two Councils to make sure that whatever Africa is engaging in is to the benefit and within the intentions of the international community, in particular the Security Council.

The other issue that we discussed was one that arose during the South African presidency in March, namely, a way to explore how the United Nations could, on a case-by-case basis, which was the phrase that was used, be able to assist with resources, in particular in cases where the African Union is acting on

behalf of the Security Council. That is a very difficult issue because it involves rules that are not set in the Security Council, but rather next door in the General Assembly, about how assessed contributions can be handled or used. But we thought that the fact that we have begun to engage on this issue was extremely important.

There were a few things that we wanted to follow up concerning that issue. One thing which I must mention is that there was talk during our visit to Addis Ababa about the fact that the mandate of the Africa Union Mission in the Sudan would expire at the end of this week. I saw yesterday that in fact, as promised by the African Union Peace and Security Council, the Union's mandate in the Sudan has been extended for another six months. That shows that some of the issues that we discussed and thought should be followed up have indeed been taken up.

We then proceeded to Khartoum, where we of course met with the Foreign Minister and senior officials, including the three governors of the Darfur province. Again, in my personal view, I found the senior officials in the Sudan to be very forthcoming and unambiguous in their acceptance of the hybrid force. They were also willing to engage and exchange views. We felt that was a very important positive step with regard to the situation in Darfur. Indeed, President Al-Bashir himself confirmed the same thing to us when we met with him later in our visit. We therefore felt that this was at least a major breakthrough, in that the issue that is now left as a challenge for us is implementation.

I would like to raise an idea that we informally talked about on the plane, namely, that we now need a timeline about who is going to do what. As I said, the AU has already followed up on one of their responsibilities. But we need a timeline that spells out what the Security Council will do, what the AU will do and what the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will do. I hope that this issue will be visited at an appropriate time.

Finally, we also visited Accra, where we met with President Kufuor of Ghana, Chairman of the African Union. We were very honoured that the Foreign Minister of Ghana spent a long time with us engaging on the details of the issues and offering the views of the African Union. They also affirmed to us that they viewed the agreement on the hybrid mission in the Sudan to be a very positive thing for the African Union as a whole. They hope to take up that issue this weekend when the African Union Summit meets again in Ghana. The President of Ghana was also pleased to meet with us. We also got his views on the issues.

All in all, I must say two things. For me as the representative of South Africa, it was a tremendous honour to work with my colleague the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom as co-leader. I will always value this experience, especially as someone who is in the Council temporarily. This is one of those things that I will take away when I leave here.

The other thing is that I also want to pay tribute to our Secretariat friends who accompanied us. I am in awe of what they did. They woke up long before I did, and they interpreted for me where the language was very difficult. I just want to be on the record to say that we are in awe of the help that they gave us. We thank them very much. It made our trip very nice.

The President: I thank Ambassador Kumalo for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Sir Emyr Jones Parry.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Thank you for being with us again, Mr. Minister. My thanks go also to my colleagues for allowing Ambassador Kumalo and me to act as co-leaders. I would like to say what a pleasure it was to do that.

I would like to situate my comments, first, in the context of Africa, a continent which has really been neglected, in part, by the international community, and which takes up 60 per cent of our time in the Council. For the United Nations as a whole, it is a major opportunity and a major challenge. Our remit, of course, is specifically security and the maintenance of international peace and security.

To start with, I should like to present two impressions of the role of the Council. The first is that, increasingly, the Council will have to look to regional actors — as it already does — to help us actually maintain international peace and security. It follows, as night follows day, that if the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) is delivering better peace and security in Africa, it helps us in terms of our remit. I believe that the African Union accepts that it is we who have the overall responsibility, but working together on shared objectives is absolutely vital. And

that is not just with the African Union; it is with every regional body or other body which might have a role to play.

There is also a need to have coherence across all the matters which are relevant to peace and security. And that is not just within a narrow focus — peacekeeping — it is conflict prevention, stopping conflict, trying to build peace, looking after DDR — demobilization, demilitarization and reinsertion into society — and security sector reform. All those are basic to how you achieve security. And, of course, there are key interests of the Council, but there are key interests of other bodies too, and rightly so. However, I believe that the need to try to achieve greater coherence across those interventions, by the actors who are working there, was reaffirmed to me on this mission.

With specific regard to the African Union, as Ambassador Kumalo said, the sheer number of issues in which we have a commonality of interests and a common purpose in what we are trying to do demonstrates why the joint declaration of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council was so important. I hope that it will not be treated as just another piece of paper. Without going into detail, I will say that what Ambassador Kumalo and I will do is write to the President of the Security Council asking that it become a formal document of the Council. It must then be a document that is acted upon day by day by our Secretariat, by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and by the Council as a whole.

The document contains some important points, including that before either body decides to take action in the African theatre, it should try to be cognizant of what the other thinks. That has to be an improvement. And the whole question of financing and maintaining financing for AU operations — which we have seen in the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) in Darfur — is so sensitive but so necessary. Actually, all of us are going to have to try to see how we can better maintain the financing of African Union operations.

In the discussion of individual countries and areas of concern, Darfur, of course, took up a major part of the time. I thought that the discussions we had with President Konaré, with Commissioner Djinnit and with the Peace and Security Council were very helpful. We all agreed on the need for rapid deployment of the hybrid operation and the details pertaining to its operation. But we also stressed the importance of revitalizing the political process in Darfur and ensuring that humanitarian relief is delivered. The fact that the AMIS mandate has been renewed just means that we must also concentrate on the question of how that mission should be financed for the duration of its time, until it makes the transition to the hybrid operation.

With regard to Somalia, there was lots of discussion and, obviously, a keen wish to see political reconciliation in the country and an end to the present state of affairs. And that simply means, I think, three things: first, that the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) needs to be strengthened and security delivered in Somalia; secondly, that humanitarian relief has to be delivered; and thirdly, that in the very small window available, the Transitional Federal Government has to reach out to parties in Somalia and try to achieve a broader agreement so that there can be a political track to accompany the security track. That is essential if the Security Council is then going to move on to what the United Kingdom would like: to discuss seriously whether we can create, or have created, the conditions for a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Somalia and how we should do that. But those are very difficult issues.

As the Security Council, we also briefed the AU Peace and Security Council on our approach to the Ethiopia-Eritrea border dispute and to the issue of the Lord's Resistance Army. In turn, we heard how the Peace and Security Council sees the African Union's efforts to resolve the political crisis in the Comoros.

We then moved on, as Ambassador Kumalo said, to the Sudan, where it was encouraging that, with all the questions put to them, both the Foreign Minister and the President implicitly confirmed total unconditional acceptance of the hybrid operation. That is very welcome. And I have to say that the tone of the discussions in Khartoum was so much better than on our mission last year: so far, so good.

I cannot stress too much, however, that we have arrived at where we are through sustained pressure and argument for what we need to do in Darfur and that, in my view, the Government of the Sudan has come to the present cooperation only because of all the international pressure that has been put upon it. Experience suggests that the Security Council, and individual countries on the Council, will have to be

vigilant not only in working together cooperatively, but also in maintaining that wish and that pressure so that the Government of the Sudan now does what it needs to do. At the same time, we are, quite rightly, chastised by that Government because we do not put enough pressure on the rebels, who at this stage bear as heavy, if not heavier, responsibility. The need to put pressure on them and criticize them is all too obvious. That means that bringing both sides to an accord in the shortest possible time scale is the best way of providing long-term security and peace in Darfur.

Accra was what we expected: tremendous development compared with where we were three years ago. The whole city vibrates with the progress that Ghana is making. Both the President and the Foreign Minister were very generous with their time. I thought they were very close to the Council in terms of commonality of purpose, that they had a political determination to deliver the same set of objectives and that their aspirations for Africa were very positive indeed.

I, too, should like to conclude by thanking my colleagues for their participation and their contributions during the mission. My thanks go also to the Secretariat for all its support and, indeed, to our host Governments and all those who made it possible for the mission to function as well as it did.

The President: I thank Ambassador Jones Parry for his briefing.

(*spoke in French*)

I now give the floor to Mr. Enrique Chávez, who will speak on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Jorge Voto-Bernales, who led the Security Council mission to Abidjan.

Mr. Chávez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me, before reading out Ambassador Voto-Bernales's statement, to welcome your presence here, Mr. Minister, as you lead the work of the Security Council. I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the delegation of Belgium on its excellent leadership of our work during the month of June.

I will now read Ambassador Voto-Bernales's statement.

> "After its visit to Accra, the Security Council mission went to Abidjan on 18 and 19 June. As is well known, the terms of reference of the mission were essentially to welcome the ownership of the peace process by the Ivorian parties, in the context of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement, to encourage the parties to continue resolutely with this process, and to examine with the parties the consequences of the Agreement as regards the role of the United Nations in the next few months.
>
> "The mission therefore met with Mr. Djibrill Bassolé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso, representative of the Facilitator of the Agreement, President Blaise Compaoré: with Mr. Guillaume Soro, the new Prime Minister of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire; and with Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic.
>
> "In addition, the mission had a working meeting with the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Abou Moussa, the commanding Generals of the military component of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the French forces that support it, the main civil officials of UNOCI and the United Nations team in Côte d'Ivoire.
>
> "Thanks to these meetings, the mission observed certain matters that I will now bring to the Council's attention. I must state that the terms in which these preliminary observations are drafted are entirely my responsibility.
>
> "The political Agreement of Ouagadougou has created a new atmosphere in Côte d'Ivoire that all our interlocutors highlighted. It is true that the Agreement has not immediately resolved the problems of substance that are at the very heart of the Côte d'Ivoire crisis, but it has unleashed a new dynamic to resolve those problems at the initiative of the parties themselves. Both President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Soro sought to emphasize that delays in the past two months were due exclusively to technical reasons. The negotiators of the Agreement had underestimated the time it would take to set up a new Government. However, at the political level, the determination of the parties to apply the agreement remained intact.

"The mission's interlocutors also appealed to the United Nations to continue assisting Côte d'Ivoire and to extend UNOCI through the period leading up to the elections. The process needs to be continued. Technical assistance and support in the field of security must be provided; international assistance for Côte d'Ivoire must be mobilized; and the certification of the electoral process must be carried out. I will refer specifically to this latter process in a moment.

"As regards security, the mission's interlocutors pointed to a very meaningful improvement of the situation, which has remained fairly calm since the Ouagadougou Agreement was signed. The commanders of the neutral forces estimate that the risk of a return to hostilities is minimal. Indeed, since the elimination of the confidence zone on 16 April, there has not been a single significant armed incident in that sector.

"But there are still elements of concern. The first is in the west of the country, where there are still active militias. The second has to do with criminality, which, though stable, remains high. In this respect, the commanders of the neutral forces have confirmed that there are still many illegal control posts on the roads, particularly in the eastern part of the country, and even inside Abidjan. The third factor of concern relates to the process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, disarmament of the militias and the reform of the security forces. The commanders of the neutral forces have pointed out that there has been very little progress in this area. They did, however, welcome that the Facilitator is presently trying to resolve the problem of ranks and quotas in the army, because if that were solved the process could be reinitiated.

"In reply to our questions about President Compaoré's request addressed to the Security Council for a partial lifting of the arms embargo, Mr. Bassolé confirmed that the request sought to endow the police forces and the gendarmes with the tools suitable for maintaining law and order. He clarified that in presenting this request to the Council, the Facilitator had merely transmitted a request from the parties. Several members of the mission expressed doubts about a partial lifting of the embargo, as disarmament and reforming the security sector were still pending. Some courses of action were outlined to bring these contradictory concerns into convergence, but I must note that on this score, the mission did not have a mandate to adopt a stance, since it was confined to pointing out that the Council would 'examine the sanctions regime in order to contribute to the peace process, taking into account the peaceful implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement'.

"Among the problems of substance to be resolved in order to find a lasting solution to the crisis, the Prime Minister emphasized the importance of identification. The representative of the Facilitator also recognized that identification was at the heart of the concerns of Côte d'Ivoire's citizens. He highlighted that the prefects had been appointed to deploy the administration in the northern part of the country, and the judges in charge of holding court had already been appointed. The main matter still to be resolved has to do with the appointment of the technical private operator. The bidding process had been carried out, and it was not felt that there was any need to re-do it. The President of the Republic expressed optimism about the possibility of moving ahead rapidly in the identification process, in parallel with voter registration.

"As to the electoral process, the parties agreed with the mission on the importance of securing the credibility of the process overall. We saw that there is consensus about the need for certification of the electoral process to be carried out by the United Nations at each stage. The request to terminate the High Representative for the elections — which had been made last April to the Secretariat's technical evaluation mission, should not be seen as any sort of reservation in respect of the certification, which was considered necessary. As for the institutional model to be established in the new resolution on the UNOCI mandate, Prime Minister Soro encouraged the mission to go along with the opinion of the Facilitator. The mission assured Mr. Bassolé that the Facilitator's opinion would duly be taken into account at the time of preparing the draft resolution.

"In conclusion, on behalf of the members of the mission, I would like to thank Mr. Abou Moussa and his team in UNOCI for their assistance, but more importantly for their daily activities in the service of peace in Côte d'Ivoire. The mission left Abidjan encouraged by the new dynamics it had noted, but also convinced that the international community had to continue accompanying this process resolutely. We have given assurances to Burkina Faso about the Council's support for its role as a Facilitator. We have exhorted the parties to persevere along the path they set out on in Ouagadougou. And finally, I would like to place on record my personal gratitude to the French delegation and, in particular, to Mr. Clément Leclerc, for the support he gave me in carrying out the responsibility that the Council was kind enough to entrust to me."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, who led the Council mission to Kinshasa.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): The last leg of the Security Council's mission was in Kinshasa on 20 June, and I had the honour to lead it. It was the Council's eighth visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but this visit had a particular nature because it came in the new context following the elections, which were successful. One can say that the page has been turned, in terms of the transition. Thus, this visit took place in a new context.

The mission took place following the adoption of resolution 1756 (2007), in which the Council decided to extend the presence of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) by adapting its mandate to the post-transitional period. We were thus able to reaffirm to the new Congolese authorities the commitment of the United Nations to help them consolidate peace, democratic institutions and the rule of law during that period, while reviewing with them the chief challenges still facing the country.

After meeting with Bill Swing and his team, we met the President of the Republic, several members of the Government together with the acting Prime Minister, the Conference of Presidents of the Senate and the Conference of Presidents of the National Assembly. We had two thematic meetings with Congolese officials on key subjects — one on security sector reform and the other on the region of the Kivus.

I believe that the mission was very useful; I will address the chief issues dealt with by the mission and give the Council my assessment.

First, we welcomed the adoption of the Government's programme and encouraged the authorities to implement it rapidly, in particular the good governance contract it contains, so that the populations may receive peace dividends. There is a legitimate impatience among the Congolese, and the authorities assured us of their determination to make rapid progress, although the Government had been in power only for three months. The Government stressed that it was beginning to work on each of the five priority areas it had identified, as could be seen in the budget adopted by the National Assembly, which will soon be considered by the Senate. A road map for local elections has been drawn up. It seems to me a good omen that, we were told, relations were good between donors and the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities, which is important for the smooth implementation of the Government's programme.

We raised with the new authorities the question of regular political dialogue which could be established between the Congolese authorities and the main international partners, taking fully into account the new situation arising from the establishment of democratically elected institutions. I am informing Council members that President Kabila said that he was open to such a dialogue, while indicating that whether to make it formal or informal was merely a technical question.

I now come to a subject which is a source of concern for everyone we spoke with: the situation in the Kivus. The instability in the Kivus due to activities of the troops of Laurent Nkunda and members of the former Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe was raised at each of our meetings. I believe I can say again — in any case that is how I felt — that this is currently the most pressing concern of the Congolese authorities. President Kabila informed us of his intention to seek a solution preferably through political and diplomatic means, without, however, completely excluding recourse to the selective use of military action against some groups, given the unacceptable nature of the continuing violence.

At the political level, the authorities were planning to organize a round table, in order to involve the entire population of the Kivus in finding a solution. At the diplomatic level, the countries of the region have been increasingly working together, but it seemed to me that clarifications and greater trust are necessary. The Congolese authorities stated they were in favour of pursuing the process. The relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in particular are key in order to fully resolve the problems in the east. Parliamentarians with whom the mission met expressed their full support for an approach that stressed the political and diplomatic paths. They noted that the impatience of a population that has been sorely tested might lead to quick solutions, but that in reality the military option had shown its limitations.

With regard to the brigades operating in North Kivu, the mission left — and it is my belief — convinced that only brassage was an option, and not mixage, which is a harmful method of circumventing the process of army integration.

That leads me to my second point, which was at the heart of our discussion: security sector reform. The general view, mentioned by everyone we spoke with, was that this must remain a priority. That is also the opinion of the Security Council. At that point, it appeared to us that more progress had been made to date with respect to the police than with respect to the army, even though, as Council members know, a number of integrated brigades had already been established. We stated that we thought it necessary to immediately consolidate the gains and to add to that initial effort in order to build a truly professional army. So that the international community could organize in order to help the Congolese authorities, we asked those authorities to formulate a plan defining the size and type of army that country needs and that matches its resources.

We also called on our interlocutors to take the necessary measures to put an end to the abuses committed by elements of the national security forces; the Congolese authorities, including President Kabila, assured us of their determination to address that problem by taking action at all levels of the military hierarchy. In more general terms I think we all noted with interest the commitment of the authorities, starting with the President of the Republic, to combating impunity and reforming the judiciary.

In accordance with our terms of reference, we also raised the question of the relationship with the opposition: the importance of respecting the space and the role conferred on opposition parties by the constitution and the need for all political parties to remain committed to the political process and to national reconciliation, with full respect for the constitutional framework and the rule of law. Those were subjects we raised with all of our interlocutors. We noted that the opposition played a significant role in the parliament and that the National Assembly had just adopted a draft law on the status of the political opposition, which has now been transmitted to the Senate.

I wish finally to take this opportunity to thank, before the Council, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Bill Swing, and all of the personnel of MONUC for their tireless efforts in the field to help the Congolese people. Now that the transition has concluded, it is important to stress that the relationship between the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a partnership. The scale of the challenges will come as no surprise to the Council, since it recently decided to maintain MONUC at full capacity; that Mission remains the largest peacekeeping operation currently deployed by the United Nations.

But I think that what we can draw from the mission is, above all, the determination to act expressed by the Congolese authorities. That determination is in response to the high expectations of the population. The Council should thus continue to give the Congolese authorities its unstinting encouragement and support, with full respect for Congolese sovereignty.

In conclusion, I should like, on behalf of all the members of the Council, to thank President Kabila and the Congolese authorities for the warm welcome we received at Kinshasa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador De La Sablière for his briefing.

On behalf of the Council, I should like to express gratitude and appreciation to all the members of the Security Council mission, which was so very ably led by Ambassadors Kumalo, Jones Parry, Voto-Bernales and De La Sablière, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The date of a meeting to discuss the written report of the mission will be fixed in consultations among the members of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.